

*Adventures of a  
Danish Emigrant*

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Tommy favorite Daughter In-law

~~Jensen Peterson~~



**ADVENTURES OF A DANISH EMIGRANT**



# *Adventures of a Danish Emigrant*

by

SORENS K. PETERSEN



GERALD J. RICKARD

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# ADVENTURES OF A DANISH EMIGRANT

## PART I

There was a time when Denmark was a great Empire, its possessions including Norway, Sweden, parts of northern Germany, Ireland, England, northern France and Iceland.

In that distant day the Danes were warlike and savage and the Vikings roamed the seas in open boats on expeditions of plunder and conquest of other nations.

With the passing of time they became docile, thereby gradually losing parts of their domain, some through incompetent leadership and some for cash, to wind up finally as a socialistic welfare state.

On the death of Harde Knud, The Incompetent, son of Canute, the Great, England was lost to Denmark. Sweden forcefully rebelled after the Danes staged the infamous "Stockholm Bloodbath," beheading many of the Swedish nobility. The Orkney and Shetland Islands were lost to England due to an unredeemed pledge for a cash loan. Trangebar in East India was sold to an English Syndicate, and Norway, under Danish rule for nearly seven hundred years, was presented to Sweden by the conquerors of Napoleon, with whom Denmark had made an unfortunate alliance. Sleswig and Holstein were lost to Germany in the war of 1864. The Virgin Islands were sold to the United States in 1916 for the sum of twenty-five million dollars, and later the Protectorate of Iceland declared its independence. The Faroe Islands are now clamoring for self-government, and Uncle Sam is casting longing glances toward Greenland, now a United States front line defense.

It was during the reign of Valdemar that the Danes won their national emblem and under the most dramatic circum-

stances. On a crusade to Estonia, as the battle progressed a split occurred in the ranks of the Danish army; a defeat seemed unavoidable. A Bishop climbed a nearby hill and released in the air a banner with a white cross interwoven on a red background, which was carried by the wind over the heads of the Danes. Its effect was to rally and bring them victory.

Thereafter this banner was adopted as their national emblem and remains so to this day, the oldest national emblem on earth.

Copenhagen, the Capital, is located on the east coast of Zeland. Originally a fishing village, in 1254 a fort was built there to cope with the Vender pirates. When captured the pirates were beheaded and their heads hung on the outside wall of the fort, as a warning to others. In 1443 it became the capital. It has had a stormy career, having from time to time been bombarded and besieged by the Swedes, the Hollanders and the British, but has always managed to survive triumphantly, mainly on account of its peculiar marshy terrain.

Denmark has an island climate. From the middle of October to May it is damp and foggy with rain and sleet, and its streets become slimy. The days are short, from 8 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. But in the month of May Denmark becomes a land of enchantment with a delightful moderate climate and with twenty-one hours of daylight. The landscape is bewitching; the white-walled low farm houses with their red tile roofs gleam among the peculiar green of the *boge* trees. The scattered snow-white clouds in the pale blue sky blend into the indigo hue of the waters of the Oresund and Kattegat. There is a pleasing quiet in the lingering twilight that blends with the characteristics of the Danes.

The last ruler of the combined Scandinavian countries was bloody Kristian, the Second. He was the first Danish ruler advocating in words and deeds the emancipation of the masses. His democratic principles were, however, premature in execution. The nobility, a minority, brought about his

ruin; forced by them to abdicate, he was imprisoned and remained so until his death.

During his reign he brought a number of truck farmers from Holland to cultivate a small island, Amager, separated by a narrow strait from Zeland, to grow and furnish Copenhagen with vegetables. A special market place was dedicated to them, where to this day they market their produce. A peaceful, hard-working group, these—my Ancestors.

## PART II

No one knows the exact age of the old low rambling one-story tile-roofed house in the village of Sundby, located on the main thoroughfare to Copenhagen. It looked as casual and contented as the surrounding landscape. Only on market days was the quiet and dreamy atmosphere disturbed by the farmers, who brought their produce to market and the rims on their wagon wheels contacted the cobble-stone pavement. For generations these farmers had stopped to buy their garden seeds and spices from old Widow Tomsen, who owned the old house. Later in life she deeded the property and business to her twenty-one-year-old nephew, who had recently completed a business course in Copenhagen.

It was in January, 1868, when Johannes, a handsome, black-haired, full-bearded man opened shop. The counter was planed and polished, the merchandise placed in order. A brand new kerosene lamp replaced the candles, a pied-piper was engaged to drive the rats and mice away.

Seven years later Johannes married, after a courtship of three years, conducted mostly by mail, as his fiancée, Kristine Jeppesen, lived on another island. Visits were by sailing vessel, time varying from a day to a week, according to the wind. Their courtship was not very exciting anyway. Their meetings were heavily chaperoned by Widow Tomsen. Just once did they manage to be alone, that once on the evening when Tivoli demonstrated, for the first time in Denmark, illumination by gas. Watching in astonishment fire spurting from the iron pipes, Widow Tomsen forgot and became lost in the crowd.

With a constant increase in Johannes' business and family, the old Tomsen house became inadequate, indeed "in-

tolerable," when Mother Kristine made his family a half dozen by giving birth to twin boys, who were named Knud and Erik in honor of two great Danish kings. (Knud is the author of this sketch.)

It was then that the old house was torn down and a three-story brick dwelling of the latest architectural lines and modern conveniences erected in its place, with illumination and cooking by gas and heated by tall round ornamental iron stoves. The exterior lintels over the windows and doors were sculptured lion heads in sandstone. It was a sensation on the island.

Father wore the conventional business man's attire; a black morning coat, striped trousers and wooden shoes. He was born with the personality and integrity which we attribute to the best of human beings, very punctual, an unostentatious soul of simplicity, a rustic philosopher, as manifested in his corny maxims. One was, "To keep a wife happy, keep her working, poor and pregnant," but he was careful to add that in practice that maxim did not apply to Mother, who was an exceptional wife, but that it fitted well with our washerwoman who had seven children and a drunken husband. When the washerwoman confided to Mother that she was thinking about separating from her husband, Father said he would not tolerate such an immoral person in his house.

He expected strict obedience from his help and his children. On the top shelf in the hall cabinet he kept a Spanish cane which he used frequently on the children. There was an intermission, sometimes of days, between discovery of guilt and its punishment, then followed a cold, premeditated connection of his Spanish cane with the miscreant's fanny. It was physical as well as mental torture.

His recreation was an occasional trip to neighboring countries, which he preferred to take without Mother. Women, he said, were a nuisance to travel with. At that time traveling was an arduous undertaking, as the coaches had no lavatory, heating, sleeping or dining accommodations. When Father announced his intention to take a trip, Mother would



pack a crude black-painted wooden box with pumpernickel sandwiches, a Gladstone bag containing personal things and two heavy woolen robes.

On a trip to Switzerland with his brother-in-law he became surprised to find his lunch box contained only a pickled herring. My twin brother, who was endowed with an enormous appetite, had made a foray on the box the night before Father's departure. The culprit was easily identified by the evidence he left behind—he abhorred pickled herrings.

Father placed great importance on punctuality in keeping appointments, on which as a rule he appeared long beforehand, a virtue that reversed itself when he insisted over Uncle's protest on arriving at the Station an hour before their train's departure for home. "Uncle," obviously a dawdler, came huffing and puffing, barely missing the train where he failed to find Father, who was fast asleep in the Station.

Dressed in heavy woolen garments, Father must have suffered intensely from the July heat on his trip to the Holy Land. On his return it was the first time anyone ever heard him complain of the heat. He felt, though, that the trip had been more than worth while. A monk had sold him a sliver of the original Cross on which Christ was crucified. It was placed under glass on a shelf in the knicknack cabinet in the parlor. My oldest brother pronounced it a fake, which statement cost him a bout with the Spanish cane.

Among his employees Father always managed to have a simple-minded handy man to use as a butt for his jokes. Among those Loritz was a favorite, a stocky, nonchalant, stoical individual with the pathetic eyes of a Spaniel. He wore knee-high riding boots, a left-over from his cavalry days, a chapeau which he always kept on his head. It was only after several years in our employ, when a gust of wind blew it off, that we saw that he was bald. A great blow to his ego, as he had fallen in love with my oldest sister, recently returned from a domestic course in a country vicarage, where economy must have been featured. She could cut bread

thicker, spread butter and slice bologna thinner than paper, for the most insipid sandwiches, to the disgust of everyone except Loritz, who ate his meals in the kitchen, complimenting her, between each bite, on her culinary art. The social gulf between them prevented direct action; his choice of an intermediary fell on me, always glad to earn two *ore*.

We both visited Rullekonen (mangle woman) who claimed to be endowed with visionary propensities. After a long consultation and a charge of a Krone and a long spell of meditation she came up with the following recipe, which she said had worked in the most stubborn cases. "Prick the name of the object of your affection on an apple, tie it with a white handkerchief under your left armpit during a night's sleep. Whoever is enticed to eat the apple will be your slave of love."

Sister found the apple on Loritz's empty lunch plate. Not particularly fond of apples, she gave it to our cross-eyed maid, who was already in love with Loritz and according to lover tradition, rushed to capture Loritz' affection by offering him the apple, much to his disgust.

This required another consultation with Rullekonen, who now recommended direct action by writing a burning epistle of love, duly delivered by me. From then on Loritz ate his meals, which Mother brought him, in the rear of the store. Perhaps there was magic in Rullekonen's love remedy, for it wasn't long after that the cross-eyed maid and Loritz became engaged and he asked for an advance payment on his wages with a view to the purchase of an engagement ring. At that time it was customary in Denmark to grant engaged couples marriage privileges and it took many convincing arguments to prevent Loritz from moving into the maid's chamber.

To maintain his dignity Father would on occasion reprimand Loritz for his attempted familiarities. Once, over-indulging in gastronomic exercises and ordered to stop, he protested, "But you indulge in it yourself!" "Yes," Father

retorted, "but what you're perpetrating is a luxury, mine is a necessity."

After Loritz married, Father brought a wedding gift, a hanging kerosene lamp, to his residence. Father carried the shade and chimney; I carried the heavy iron lamp. After climbing five flights of stairs, an elderly woman answered our knock. A couple of small children were playing on the floor.

"We must be in the wrong place," said Father. "Loritz has no children."

"Oh, no," said the woman. "They belong to his wife, but don't forget, we know who their fathers are."

Just then the wife came panting up the stairs. Inviting us inside, she sent her mother to the store for two ounces of coffee, half a pound of chicory and a quarter pound of brown sugar.

Father was scrutinizing the letters he received in answer to an advertisement for a new clerk when the parson paid him a call. During their conversation the parson informed Father that science could now determine a person's character through his handwriting. The letters were sent to the Spenserian Institute for analysis. The experts chose a Karl Steele. They were wrong but the name was right; he nearly ruined Father by his thefts.

There was old man, Jensen, "an ardent Baptist," who came every morning to sweep the sidewalk and cobblestone road in front of our store. On account of his religious belief, he was considered by many as a peculiarity. One evening at supper Mother mentioned about what a nice man Mr. Jensen was. Father then made a remark of how sad it was that we would never meet him in heaven. On my inquiry what Mr. Jensen had done to deny him this blessing, Father said, "There is no space in heaven for a Baptist." Later when I told Mr. Jensen about Father's remark, he said "Your Father is mistaken, I am the one who is going to heaven, not your Father."

Outside of extremes in warm clothes, Father advocated



moderation in all things, such as leaving the table while still hungry. The children's evening meal was limited to three pumpernickel sandwiches, a slice of white bread and a cup of tea, which for me was only an appetizer. After the meal I usually visited a crock on the pantry floor which served as a depository for mouldy and stale bread, gifts for the chicken woman down the road. But it helped me to round out the meal.

Christmas was a busy time, for then our parlour and dining room floors were strewn with utensils of all descriptions, bottles of wine and boxes of cigars that had better to be smoked in the open, all gifts to our customers, valued in proportion to the amount of Kronen spent by them during the year. This developed often into many arguments, sometimes resulting in the loss of a customer who felt he had been slighted.

Mother was born on the island of Fyen, the lone daughter of a prosperous silversmith and ship owner; like her mother, she claimed to be a descendant of nobility and inclined to be a bit haughty. She always dressed immaculately and insisted on correct manners. To Father, who was void of pretense, the very word "etiquette" was an irritant. Though he helped Mother to enforce manners on the children, he seemed to prefer the company of his peasant customers. However, it was Mother's knowledge of the social amenities that persuaded Father to acquire the new house and furnishings and to cultivate a more gracious way of life.

Although Mother was an excellent cook, she employed kitchen and other help to do the housework, spending much of her time sitting by a sewing table in front of a window, as did most of the ladies of that day, crocheting and gossiping about trivialities while watching the weddings and funeral activities from the church across the road, or peeking in the curiosity mirror.

I can't remember Mother ever bestowing any caresses on her children. Even my "good-bye" from her, on my departure for America was a cold limp handshake.

Her most exciting moments were the days King Kristian, the ninth, known as the royal father-in-law of Europe, entertained the royal clan with a hunt in Kongelunden, at the extreme end of the island. Gaudy gilded open carriages drawn by six horses and led by fleet runners would pass our doors. Then Mother would have the windows shined and fresh curtains hung and place herself by the window holding a pair of lorgnettes before the eyes. Perhaps the greatest thrill of her life was when Prince Edward waved his hand in her direction, probably mistaking her for a maiden of whom he was reputed to be very fond. There were whispered rumors about clandestine moonlit visits with the rosy-cheeked Amager girls, and hushed gossip about royal bastards.

One of Mother's dark moments was the day the village erected a cast iron pissour directly across the road from our house. The door announced entrance by a loud metallic clang; its two sides barely covered the average person's middle. When a short person entered, the situation became embarrassing, and quite impossible when the women who sold fish from a pushcart on the corner also decided to make use of it.

Our rather large dining room was furnished in Jacobean style. Among other unusual things was a Grandfather clock with a wooden movement. Also a large table that could be extended to accommodate twenty-four persons when family events were celebrated. When any event was celebrated the dinner started promptly at 8 P.M. Then the maid came marching in with the traditional party cake (Kransekagen) consisting of a tall tier of almond-macaroon rings, at the top of which stood a figurine symbolizing the occasion. Then came large platters laden with hors-d'oeuvres, caviar, herring salad, fish balls, smoked eels, salmon, stuffed mushrooms, fricadellen, liver-paste, assorted cold cuts, the best cheese Denmark could offer and sliced pumpernickel, made more appetizing with servings of Aquavit and Carlsberg beer.

The first course was banquet soup, a beef broth with meat balls and egg dumplings added. The next course was

salmon in ring mold and fish pudding in mushroom sauce. The entree was a large cabbage head, stuffed with ground meat spiced with pepper berries and served with melted butter. The main course was mock turtle, Mother's culinary masterpiece, made from a head of veal and many other ingredients. The proper wines were served at each course. The dessert was crumb apple cake served from a large bowl topped with whipped cream generously dotted with current jelly. When coffee and cognac were served, Mother's favorite guest and distant relative, who was chief engineer on the royal yacht "Dannebrog." He attended in gala uniform—epaulets, a sword at his side and rows of decorations received from royalty who had enjoyed safe passage on the yacht. He furnished the orations, which always ended with a toast for the gentlemen in general and the ladies in particular.

There was another relative of Mother's, married to a Swedish blacksmith who lacked in culture, if not in cash. A question came up at my sister's wedding celebration whether their son, who was a bit on the rustic side, should be invited. Mother solved the problem by selecting the engineer's daughter, who was stone deaf, as his table partner. It went very well until the stuffed cabbage head, filled with ground beef spiced with pepper berries, was served. When the waitress placed a portion on his partner's plate, he bellowed at the top of his voice, "Don't eat that! We had that at home some time ago; the left over fed to the pigs gave them the shits."

Only once did I hear controversial unpleasantness between my parents. A Norwegian pilot paid us a visit, exhibiting a silver spoon engraved with the letters "Kaas." This was the name of the noble family from which Mother claimed to descend. During a rebellion in Norway, Kaas had left for Denmark in a chartered yacht which was wrecked on the coast of Norway. Later, on a fishing trip he hauled a silver spoon to the surface. He had marked the exact spot, he stated, and would for a consideration recover what was left, if anything in the hulk. When Father declined the offer, Mother burst into tears.

Class distinctions were very pronounced in Denmark. A woman addressed as "Madamme" was sure to be the wife of a menial worker; as "Frue," most likely to be that of the apothecary, or such. A girl of the better class was a "Froken," otherwise a "Toss."

Introductions were of great formality, mentioning the profession first, then the name, followed by a deep bow. Persons of authority were addressed "De," others by "Du." Our parents insisted on us children obeying the rules of etiquette. When company arrived we formed a line, made a deep bow, then herded into a rear bedroom. Father said, "children should be seen, not heard."

## PART III

The arrival of twin boys on April 6, 1882, in a house already crowded with four other children must have been a dreadful moment for Mother, who immediately sent Johannes to Copenhagen in search of a wet nurse.

Kristine, a pertinacious, rosy-cheeked peasant girl, served us in that capacity for six years. Under a constant threat of resigning, she finally came to dominate the entire household. Mother was quite relieved when she married our house carpenter. Later on, in our boyhood, Mother blamed our disobedient natures on Kristine's having nursed us.

At the age of six we started our schooling in the private school of Melchior Brothers, one of whom is the father of Lauritz Melchior, the famous opera tenor. The school was located four miles from our home. Father said the walk would do us good and besides, the brothers had a reputation of being martinets and dispensers of corporal punishment.

Old Professor Hummel was in charge of the punishment department. On the last hour of each school day he visited the classes armed with a stout Spanish cane. Boys with poor marks were called forward, told to bend and place their head between the professor's knees, whereupon they received several blows on the fanny, the number of blows depending on just how poor were their marks. Thanks to the law of deterioration in strength due to age, his blows were quite feeble—not nearly as forceful as Father's, and were administered in silence without a curtain lecture. With the system in vogue, I soon lost all respect for study marks and became a regular receiver of the professor's special services.

To me the history hours were the most interesting. Our teacher read aloud from the Elder and Younger Edda mythol-



ogy, the Sagas and Gods called Aseres. Odin resided in Val-hal, which had a room with five hundred and forty doors, each door was so wide that eight hundred giants could walk through side by side. A raven sat on each of Odin's shoulders, whispering in his ears all that was happening in the world. He had a horse named Slyphner, which had eight legs and could sprint in the air over land and water. Tor was the strongest of all Asars. His weapon was a hammer called Mjoller: it always hit the mark, then flew back into his hand. He rode in a chariot drawn by two goats; this created the thunder, the sparks from his eyes the lightning.

Here were whiz-bang Gods much more exciting than the tame characters about whom Father used to read aloud on Winter evenings out of Martin Luther's Home Postil. Besides, one need not pray to them every evening.

At school the most dreadful were the hours of arithmetic, presided over by a pedagogue in the shape of Fatty Arbuckle whom we nicknamed "Montibello" after an unoccupied balloon that left Tivoli every Summer Sunday afternoon, with a reward for its capture. He would place himself in front of the students, sweep the classroom with a cold glance and point a Spanish cane toward the problem on the blackboard. On demanding an answer from a student who, already on the edge of nervous prostration, failed to answer correctly, would receive a hard smack from a ruler on the finger tips. The result was that none learned arithmetic. We used diverse routes to and from school, carrying our knapsacks containing our books, and a lunch most often eaten before we reached school.

In the early Spring we walked on top of the old embankments that once surrounded Copenhagen, cast up many, many years before to resist the invading rapacious Swedes. Approaching twilight there was a contagion in the air, breathing forth an atmosphere of fancies and apparitions of dead Swede soldiers floating in the moat below, who had perished from the hot tar poured down upon them by the brave woman of Copenhagen. Other times we fished in the moat,

filling our knapsacks with crabs and frogs—and got our fannies warmed when we released a load of frogs on our parlor floor.

Some mornings we met our king taking his exercise on a white horse; we took our caps off and bowed deeply. Once he stopped to inquire about our progress in school. He was not my idea of a king; he wore no armor or sword, not even a decoration—just a nice old gentleman. It seemed almost a sin to wish for his death so that we could get off from school on the day of his funeral.

Pentecost was a great day for the Copenhagen hoipolloi, for then, according to custom, decked in new garments they flocked to picnic in Dyrhavsbyggens amusement park. Father's pentecost was spent on a tramp with one of the boys, visiting points of historical interest. Elsinore Castle impressed me more than any other. Here, according to legend, Holger Danske in a shining armor, his immense beard grown fast to the top of a marble table, one hand on a large sword, the other on Denmark's coat of arms, sat waiting to come forward in Denmark's hour of need to save it from destruction. Here, too, was Hamlet's reputed grave, in which, Father said, only a great Dane dog was buried.

The long Winter evenings were boring except before Christmas, when we spent them making tree decorations. It was always a sad evening when Father dumped a heap of rice full of mouse dirt on the dining room table to be sorted by us children, who invented all kinds of excuses to be relieved of this task.

The girls would suddenly feel an urge to visit the toilet, located in the back yard. To scare the trolls away, it was my job to stand by the yard entrance and whistle the Danish national anthem. If the whistle got dry and low, there were cries of "Louder! Louder!" from the outhouse.

On awakening on our birthday, there was a little table placed beside the bed, on it a square of chocolate, an orange, a box of tin soldiers, a small Noah's Ark filled with carved wood animals. As time passed the presents became suitable to

our age. We were also allowed to select the day's dinner menu, which, in my case, was hash, my twin brother's choosing brown bean soup. On that day corporal punishment was dispensed with, of which we took full advantage. It wasn't long before there were loud arguments as to whose tin soldiers were to win the battle, followed by physical combat in which my brother, being less aggressive, generally lost. Then Mother would go to the speaking tube, equipped with a whistle at each end, that led down to the store, blow very hard the "emergency signal" and demand Father's presence, which immediately ended hostilities.

There were several holidays, remnants from the days when the Danes were good Catholics, that were in part celebrated and of great interest to the boys. On St. Hans Eve the boys from our village would assemble on the old embankments, light a large bonfire as a signal to the older boys from the neighboring villages for a combat. Whoever was pushed or fell down the embankment was out. The village of the boy last remaining on top was declared the winner. Years later the boys came armed with clubs and brass knuckles and the fun was put to an end by the police.

An opera, *Elverhoj*, was composed to celebrate St. Hans Eve and this Father took us to see at the Royal Opera House. It made a great impression on us, particularly after Grandmother told us she had seen the trolls raise the hill in the air, on four glowing pillars, right back of her uncle's barn. The trolls and the elves danced, drank mjöd, and caroused, all in contempt of the holy saint. If a human could be enticed to go up the hill and drink from a golden horn, he would die the instant he had relations with an earthly woman.

The legend tells of a Widow Ulfstad who offered the best horse in her barn to the farmhand with courage enough to ride to Elverhoj on holy Saint Hans night. One farmhand accepted the challenge and when an elfe offered the rider a drink of mjöd from the golden horn, he cast the drink on the ground and escaped with the horn. When the Widow Ulfstad refused to return the horn, the trolls bewitched her



home, which shortly thereafter became a funeral pyre for herself and her seven sons. The golden horn of the legend is to this day on exhibition in a museum in Skaane, Sweden.

One day Father bought an old-fashioned farm house located down the road. It was built of hewn timber uprights, whose interstices were filled with clay. One end of the house, formerly used as a barn, was turned into seed storage bin, the other end contained two apartments, one occupied by Aunt Tomsen whom Father was obligated to keep for life in exchange for her store; the other apartment by his mother.

The house stood a distance from the road, looking upon a garden, decked with tasteful shrubbery and showy flowers. There was also a spacious garden in the rear, where each child possessed three berry bushes, which Father expected us to prune and fertilize. Mine weren't properly attended to; what little fruit they bore was picked and eaten prematurely. Raids on the others' bushes brought on many fights and the spilling of tears.

The apricot tree Father planted was not expected to bear fruit in Denmark's cold climate. Surprisingly, however, it bore one apricot, "a phenomenon," Father said and talked about it to whomever would listen. When the apricot was about three-quarters ripe, I yielded to temptation, plucked it, took one bite and, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, found it to be far below its reputation for flavor. At the evening meal Father looked sternly at the children and stated: "Someone has plucked the apricot." My guilty look called for no explanation. My private interview with Father was set for a week from date.

Constant hostility existed between Aunt Tomsen and Grandmother, caused mostly by jealousy over Father's attentions. Trivial incidents provoked irritation and disputes which Father tried to settle amicably. Whereas Grandmother kept her rooms as neat as a pin, Aunt's were in a state of constant disarray, exuding a musty odor. Following the custom, she wore six or seven petticoats, ankle long, home-knitted red bloomers and wooden shoes with innersoles of

braided straw. On her gossip trips she yanked the table cloth off the table to use it as a scarf. Allergic to menial tasks, there was always an *ore* or two reward for the children who offered their assistance. Washing and rinsing her red bloomers constituted the most desirable job: we placed these in the well bucket for a few dips, hoisted and hung them on a line. The red drippings we pretended to be blood flowing from the dying Indians. The war whoops brought out Grandmother in protest against the red drinking water.

Along the entire west coast of Amager Island runs a long strip of land, about half a mile wide. It was overgrown with turf and marsh grass and many holes made by exploding shells, the artillery using it as a proving ground. Due to the low terrain, the holes filled with water deep enough to accommodate small marine life. Because of danger from exploding shells, trespassing was forbidden.

Midway, hugging the border, stood a small straw-thatched antiquated house. A couple of leaning sheds served as barn and hogpen, all in a sad state of decay.

Both Grandmother and Auntie had told a score of fearful anecdotes about the hook-nosed, wrinkle-faced, whimsical Hytte Steene, who was a descendant of the original Amager clan and dressed in their original Amager traditional costume. When she married out of clan she was ostracized by her connections. According to gossip, hers was a "house of bewitchery"; folks told about elves and trolls who danced and drank in her vegetable garden on Holy Saint Hans night, all in contempt of the holy saint. But Grandmother said that the best proof of "bewitchery" was the wagon wheel on the ridge of the roof, placed there many years before to lure storks to build nests on it, but, although the region was well adapted for that need, they had avoided her house by many miles.

When Buffalo Bill's circus came to Copenhagen, every boy who could scrape up admission fee attended and the heroic acts we witnessed roused the war spirit of our gang to a high pitch. Thereafter nicknames were discarded for

heroic Indian names; the "snot eater" became the Pathfinder, the "spit slicker" became Uncas, the sneak became Hawkeye, and so forth.

Father's garden became our battlefield, his flowers the casualties. Auntie's red bloomers were worn to a frazzle from rinsing to furnish the blood of battle. Grandmother nearly went crazy from listening to the war whoops, until Father tossed the lot of us out. Far from dampening our war spirit, we went in search of other battlefields.

Even though Steene's house was shunned by most people, we youngsters thought it well adapted as one on which to wage our wars. And where could you find anyone looking more like a squaw than Hytte Steene? But Steene claimed the entire territory as hers and tolerated no intruders.

Our introduction to Steene was not according to the prevailing rules of etiquette: quite the contrary, it came with a bang. On a certain spring day, playing "hookey" from school to try out an old musket, as we came near Steene's house an eagle came flying low toward us. Raising the musket to fire, I pulled the trigger too soon, the result being a bullet hole through the wall of her house, which brought Steene out cursing.

On our explaining the cause of the accident, she said it was wasteful to use ammunition on eagles when there were so many pheasants from the royal hunting ground always about. She never mentioned the hole in her house but, although she didn't approve of guns in the hands of boys, she expressed a willingness to teach us how to shoot. We readily agreed to that on condition that we could keep our gun in her house, to which she, in turn, agreed.

There was a motive behind Steene's offer. There were jobs too strenuous for a woman her age to cope with, and she practiced reciprocity to a highly satisfactory degree, for, after we performed any job, with more alacrity than skill, her praise was unstinted and incessant. With unfailing patience and diligent search she could always find in the

nearby rubbish dump items such as we needed for our boyish activities.

This was the beginning of a wonderful friendship that lasted to the day I left for America.

Steene took pride in her knowledge of Indians, learned from her uncle, who years before, had returned from California with a bottle filled with gold dust and stories of hair raising escapes from the Apaches. Our Indian headgear was made from goose feathers and war paint from soot under the stove lid. She planned our strategy, inspired our battles and took care of the wounded. Disputes between the boys were settled by a fist fight, with each boy stripped to the waist and at the finish she hailed the victor and soothed the loser. In the early spring days when the artillery was not practicing a cannonade, the gang went to the shore on fishing expeditions. Steene would shed petticoats and knitted wool stockings and start wading, which required caution as there were many neck-deep shell holes in the terrain. Toward evening when a fire becomes agreeable, we hied ourselves to her house. Then, while the meal was simmering on the old stove, the boys sat at a rickety table in the flickering yellow light of a kerosene lamp that cast grotesque, shadow-figures of the group on the walls. No wonder folks thought Steene a Harri-dan, the way she looked in the dim-lit room stirring her concoctions in the caldron, babbling to herself. Had the boys never seen the kindly gleam in her eyes, there would have been a mad rush for the door!

Home, full of scrimps and late for supper, started Father to worrying about my loss of appetite and he called the doctor, who prescribed sulphur and molasses.

Our most exciting day was late in the fall when Steene butchered her hog and made blood sausages. First, there was a scramble to catch and tie the hog's hind legs; then, after we hoisted it in the air under the head door jam, a wooden trough was placed under the hog's head to catch the blood when its throat was cut, one of us stirring it. One year we missed the blood sausage, for the weight of the hog broke



the jam and it ran into the marsh grass with Steene in hot pursuit, landing on its back. After a struggle it finally collapsed from loss of blood.

There was no doubt about Steene's resourcefulness. When her cow swelled from eating green apples, she cut a hole in its back to release the gas.

What she enjoyed a lot was our return from a freebooting cruise among the orchards, or from a poaching trip to the royal hunting ground bringing back a pheasant or two. We were rewarded with panful of after panful of aebleskiver, (ball pancakes), with a liberal sprinkling of brown sugar. Between pans there was the usual inclination of boys to excel in "blab," during which on one occasion I made some remarks about the sliver of the Cross Father had brought from the Holy Land. Steene moved the pan from the fire, blew her nose on the corner of her apron and said, "I don't believe it!" When one of the boys verified my statement, she expressed a wish to see the relic, which was promptly promised by me.

With not enough courage to ask Father for the loan of the relic, on leaving for school the following morning I put it into my pocket. As the day wore on I became haunted with compunction and felt like the robber of the Holy Grail. My tortured mind was somewhat relieved during our religious hour, the lesson being that of the robber who received absolution on the Cross.

I made record time from school to Steene and placed the relic on her table. Her eyes glistened as she clasped her hands in adoration, made a couple attempts before she got her parched tongue in motion, and then said, "It is almost a sacrilege to have such a holy relic in my humble house!" Approaching it with both curiosity and trepidation, she knelt before it and crossed herself, the while moving her lips in silent prayers. I felt then that my brother hadn't received nearly enough punishment from Father's cane when he had declared that it was a fake.

When I left for America and came to say goodbye and to

thank Steene for the many happy hours spent with her, she kissed my cheek and said, "May God see *you* back, too, with a bottle of gold dust."

Years later, on a visit to Denmark, I paid a visit to where Steene's house once stood. Only part of the foundation was left, the ground where once garden truck had grown had long since been leveled, briars and weeds now grow in promiscuous confusion over the desolated earth.

Another incident that comes to memory is that of my confirmation. The well-fed vicar, who had a snug dwelling near the church, with an ample salary from the State, was rather a vain type of individual. A privileged guest at the tables of the fastidious and overbearing in his attitude toward the impecunious, his oratorial specialty was dull sermons, his teaching to the confirmation class unimpressive and dull. In the days of my boyhood, confirmation was at the age of fourteen and was the first step on the journey toward virile manhood. Boys wore their first long pair of pants and were allowed to smoke in public.

A universal gift was a meerschaum cigar holder with an amber mouthpiece. It was a common sight on Confirmation Sunday to see the boys leaning against a pole or a wall, vomiting.

Mother's mother, a domineering dowager, had attended the older children's confirmation, presenting each with a gold watch. Much to our chagrin, we younger boys each received a nickel-cased production watch, with the comment, "You are not responsible enough to own a gold one." She was right: both watches soon became unredeemed pledges in a pawnshop for a loan of six Kroner, spent in the rental of boats to sail the canals, of which there are many in Copenhagen. Grandma died a few days after my confirmation while sleeping in my bed. I never slept well in it after that, but considered her death a fortunate event, since it prevented her from finding out what became of those watches.

After confirmation boys—except those who had chosen to study for a profession—were apprenticed to learn a trade.

Father suggested that I learn the carpenter trade and when I rebelled he said, "carpentry was good enough for Jesus Christ, so it ought to be good enough for you."

He must have been quite relieved when I landed a job with a party of glacialists on their way to observe the movements of glaciers in Greenland.

On the old cobblestone road below our house behind a spacious lawn studded with old trees, stood an ancient white-washed cottage. Its small window panes and leaning door made no pretense of wealth, though a certain air of dignity pervaded.

It was always with profound respect and admiration that I passed the old house, for here lived Captain Jensen, one of the most able ice navigators employed by the Royal Trading Company of Denmark, whose ships traded on the west coast of Greenland as far north as the 74th latitude. At that time, by the discoveries of Admiral Peary and others, the north-western part of Greenland above Upernavik was claimed by the United States, which in 1916 relinquished its claim to Denmark as part of the purchase price of the Virgin Islands.

Captain Jensen's daring exploits in the Arctic waters were often reported in the press of Amager, a small island adjacent to Copenhagen, where Captain Jensen made his home. In my boyish estimation the Captain led a perfect life, spending the summers in the cool and dangerous Arctic and his winters behind his potbelly stove—that is, unless he got stuck in the ice for a year or two!

In 1896, then in my boyhood, boys at the age of fourteen were apprenticed to learn a trade or, if so inclined, study for a profession. My ambition was to become an adventurer and I was indeed happy to secure a job as a roustabout with a party of glacialists on their way to observe the movements of glaciers in Greenland, and more than elated that we were to sail on the bark *Thorvaldsen*, a stately vessel named after the famous Icelandic sculptor Thorvaldsen, and under the

command of Captain Jensen. I was to serve aboard as a deckhand.

Our destination was Upernavik, the most northerly Eskimo settlement visited by the Company's ships. Two years previously two of the Company's ships, which navigated well into Baffin Bay, had been crushed in the ice with all hands lost.

Our cargo consisted of provisions for the colony management, trading material useful to the Eskimos, and knocked-down barrels, later returned filled with blubber. During the weeks it required to load and rig the ship, I learned from the boatswain how to curl a line right-handed, make a line fast on a belaying-pin so that it could be instantly released; also learned to knot, short and eye splice, to furl and loosen sail.

Our complement consisted of the Captain, two mates, a carpenter, boatswain, eight seamen, a cook and an officers' messboy and, excluding the latter two, we were divided into four-hour watches. The Captain, of course, was on twenty-four hour duty. I was placed on the watch of the second mate, who on every opportunity displayed a grudge against me, due, I found later, to an oversight on the part of my father, who kept a general store and had once sold him a quart of rum in a bottle having previously contained kerosene.

A tug boat hauled us out of Copenhagen harbor into the Sound, where we loosened sail and set the course. According to the weather, my duty aboard was to furl and loosen the royals, staysails and jibs. On the four-hour watch, one hour was spent at lookout and one hour at the helm.

The retiring helmsman, in a loud voice, gave the course to his successor and God help the latter if he deviated one point on the compass or the weather side of the royal ceased flabbing on a tack; the Captain would immediately be on deck and tell the culprit off in no uncertain terms.

West of the bleak Orkney Islands we came upon a storm near the then uncharted Rockhall reef, where the trans-



Atlantic steamer, *Norge*, foundered in 1906 with a loss of six hundred lives. *Thorvaldsen* was on a port tack reefed down to the very last reef point. I was on my way from the forecastle to the quarterdeck for my turn at the wheel and holding on to the emergency guide rope when an immense wave washed me over the lee bulwark. Luckily, I became entangled in the broken guide rope and was hauled aboard by the cook.

Three weeks out we rounded Cape Farvel, the most southern point of Greenland, where we encountered our first ice, but were now running with the currents which swirl and sweep around the Greenland Coast. In the distance, toward starboard, a glorious panorama of snow-clad peaks glittered in the sunshine. Well above the Arctic circle and about to enter Umanak Fjorr, the wind calmed. The Captain ordered the old muzzle loader cannon fired, which brought a swarthy pilot and several kayakers, who were thrown a rope and, together with our crew manned in our lifeboat, proceeded to haul us through the torturous ice-laden fjord into the harbor of Umanak, where we dropped our anchor. Several Eskimos came aboard offering their handcrafts in exchange for trinkets, also to receive the customary schnapps of aquavit, celebrating the arrival of the first ship of the year, and this was to be consumed on the spot. Some, however, had bartered their portion and completed the bargain by spitting their schnapps in the buyer's mouth.

Though the cliffs were rugged and bare, the view in the fjord is magnificent beyond description. In near Disco Bay are glaciers two miles or more wide, which curve downward over the precipices, grinding and crashing over the rocks with a roar like violent thunder, and with fragments of ice breaking off in solid cubes hundreds of feet in diameter, which fill up the bay with huge icebergs carried away by the current miles beyond the shore line.

To celebrate our arrival, a hog, brought from Denmark aboard ship, was butchered. While the brass attended a banquet in the manager's home, the crew assembled in the cooper

shop for a coffee mix and a dance. The girls came dressed in bright gingham anoraks, sealskin trunks and knee-high skin boots. Their straight, coal-black hair was twisted into an oblong knob on the top of the head, encircled with a ribbon of red for the maids and blue for wives and black for the widows. When the boatswain started playing on his croaking accordion, the skin kamiks began shuffling on the rough blubber-soaked floor. As the dance progressed, the air was filled with a blended odor of blubber and urine from the skin pants and boots of the dancers, and from the hair of the girls who shampoo their hair in urine. In most Eskimo huts stands a container used for preserving urine, in which they tan their skins. After tanning, they are chewed pliant to make easy sewing for the women who in time wear their teeth to the gums.

When our loading was finished and hatches secured, we heaved the anchor and set sails for Upernavik. We had expected to arrive there in a day or two, but did not. Before Disco Island was fairly lost against the dark hills behind it, a northwest gale started blowing. The Captain ordered the men aloft to furl the gallant, royal and staysails. The ship lay on a port tag with reefed spanker, main and foretop sails, her lee rail under water and seas crashing over the weather rail, when the lookout cried, "Ice ho! Dead ahead!" A heavy line of icebergs lie across our course. The men lay to the lee and weather braces, as the helmsman laid the helm hard to for the starboard tag.

Shortly after there was one of those abrupt weather changes for which the Arctic is notorious; the wind calmed and a gray thick fog settled over the water. Proceeding with caution, we heard the sound of breakers near at hand, and before we could get our ice poles ready, we were broadside an iceberg of enormous size. Because of the fog we could not see either end of it or its top. We were in a dangerous position, the least disturbance might upset its equilibrium and cause the whole mass to revolve and crumble with the ship caught in the dissolution. Off our stern, beneath the water's

edge, the berg calved a large mass of ice which caused it to sway in opposite direction. The ship came to rest on a submerged tongue of the berg, which lifted it clear out of the water. On the rebound, the ship slid off the tongue and settled headlong in the water, while hunks of ice fell on the deck, breaking off the jib-boom and shrouds, then broke the spanker boom as she settled on an even keel. The Captain said our escape from destruction was a miracle and one of his closest calls.

We were wallowing in the calm water when a light breeze arose and lifted the fog like a curtain on a stage, revealing a most impressive scene. As far as the eye could see were immense icebergs shaped like castles in a fairy tale, two hundred feet high or more, moving majestically with the current. Impossible to penetrate this ice barrier, we set our sails and course straight toward the coast, considering ourselves lucky to have escaped.

Next day we anchored in Proven, where we spent six days waiting for the ice pack to pass before we proceeded to Upernavik, the last outpost of civilization, marked by a quaint little white-painted church and parsonage standing among the huts. Upernavik is located on a barren island; from its highest point is a view of the Angpalsarsok glacier which sends out thousands of icebergs yearly.

The arrival of the *Thorvaldsen* was an event to be celebrated with gusto. With the exception of a whaler on its way to Lancaster Sound, no communication had been had with the outside world for a period of two years.

Two weeks previous to our anticipated arrival, a party of Eskimos had arrived from northern Tasiussak by Oomiak (a large family skin boat) loaded with walrus meat and blubber to celebrate the event.

The Eskimos are carnivorous, their diet is the same as that of their dogs, the food necessary to sustain life being the meat of walrus which contains sufficient vitamins. Their only source of vegetables is when they kill a muskox or caribou and feed on the moss contents of the animals' stomachs.

The reception was held in the cooper shop and started off with a shuffle to the tune of "O Susannah" on two of key accordions. After several dances the party settled on the floor to enjoy a most insipid coffee mix. The walrus meat and the blubber were brought forward and as the meal progressed each tried to outdo the other in gastronomic excesses. Hearty laughter followed each bang and belch, whoever produced the loudest being the life of the party.

Dancing is a national pastime and a test of endurance, sometimes lasting for days. With the continual summer daylight and irregular sleeping hours, the dancers kept coming and going continually. When the odor of blubber and urine from the pants of the kifaks (men) became intolerable, I left for the outside with my dancing partner, a full-blown Eskimo by the name of Katy. She was one of the party from Tasiussak, who had formerly been employed as a maid by the colony manager and spoke some Danish. She had been promised in marriage by her folks, but to date her intended husband had failed to develop a mating instinct, so in the meantime she was in temporary possession of a widower from whom she was receiving lessons in matrimony. She was the daughter of a great hunter whose prowess made him an important man in Tasiussak. A child of fourteen years and uninitiated in the wiles of women, Katy had no trouble to extract a promise from me to accompany her back to Tasiussak for a visit to her home, incidentally telling me it was customary for visitors to bring gifts. We went to the trading post where she selected a bar of soap for her mother, a knife for her father and a pair of earrings for herself. After a three-day period and the dance still going strong, the visitors piled into their oomiak and were off for home.

Tasiussak was a dreary place, with a few native huts overgrown with moss, a dozen skin tents pitched promiscuously about among the rocks and a blubber house at the shore edge. A number of old women and several howling dogs were at the shore to bid us welcome. Katy's home was a one-story, one-room stone and mud hut. An earthen tunnel about



four feet high and ten feet long led into the garbage-strewn dwelling. Against a wall was a raised plank platform covered with a few skins; a seal bladder stretched over a small wood frame served as a window; a small hole in the ceiling served as an outlet for the smoke. We crawled through the tunnel into the dwelling, where Katy's mother sat naked on the edge of the platform cracking lice from her skin undegarmments. She gave no sign of recognition; no one does. You may help yourself to what you can use without question; no one ever offers or asks assistance. If a hunter it not able to travel any longer, he is left on the icecap to die as if he were a dog. From the looks of Katy's home I thought the gift for her mother was wisely chosen, but to my surprise, she placed a hunk of soap in her mouth and started to blow bubbles in all directions. It furnished both dessert and amusement! Katy poured water and coffee grounds into a tin can hanging from the ceilinng over a blubber fire on an incurved stone; the moss wick sent out streamers of soot that hung tatter-like from the ceiling. When the coffee was ready, her mother grabbed a dead auk lying on the floor, peeled it like an orange, ate it, washing each bite down with a gulp of coffee.

The auk is a bird the size of a starling. They nest on the side of the cliffs by the thousands. To snare them, one crouches in a cavity on the cliff side with a net attached to a long pole and swats them as they fly past. Some are eaten raw on the spot, some sewed in skin bags filled with blubber, then cached for the winter feasts. When putrid, they are considered a great delicacy!

Because of the endless Arctic summer day, sleeping was irregular, so when Katy pointed to a skin sleeping bag and suggested a nap to recover from our long journey, I removed my leather boots and started to crawl into the bag. She stopped me and said, "In Greenland we sleep naked." While in the bag I managed to remove the remainder of my clothes, but got uncomfortably surprised when she undressed and jumped in beside me.

She was soon fast asleep, while I lay and regretted my

foolish but harmless curiosity that led me to leave Upernavik. Someone came crawling through the tunnel into the hut and had a short conversation with the old woman, whereupon both left for the outside. The disturbance woke Katy who immediately left the bag and ran completely naked to the outside. Fast as I could dress, I ran to the outside where the old woman sat emptying herself, while a young fellow kept the dogs at bay. We retreated into the hut, followed by the young fellow who had a menacing scowl on his face. My anxiety was not relieved when Katy said he was her intended husband. It dawned on me then that I was being used as a tool to arouse his jealousy and thereby further her matrimonial plans.

My next sleep was at the Eskimo colony manager's hut, where I became acquainted with the ferocious Eskimo lice. On awakening, my thought were on a cup of hot coffee and Danish pastry, but found my host standing outside beside an ill-smelling fly-covered carcass, slicing off hunks, stuffing them into his mouth, never inviting me to participate.

Outside I ran across Katy who said there was to be a funeral of an old woman, and most likely a coffee mix afterward. Soon a priest came, followed by two men who carried a wide plank on their shoulders on which lay the body, enclosed in a skin bag. They placed the bag in an enclosure of stones. The priest mumbled a few words, while the men covered the bag with rocks. The mourners then retreated to the blubber house to feast on coffee and rye bread brought from Upernavik. As the days went by, I became tired of the Eskimo diet and confused by the continuous daylight and by millions of mosquitoes and flies. There was no way to get back to Upernavik. There were no ships due, as the ice condition had prevented the whalers' progress from their usual route to Lancaster Sound.

I was cooking fish under a driftwood fire by the shore when I heard loud cries, someone had sighted a herd of walrus basking on the drift ice, a distance from the shore.

The kayakers set off in pursuit. A harpoon tied to a long

sealskin line with a skin float attached to its end is driven into the beast. The hunter follows the float until the prey is exhausted, then paddles his kayak close enough to lance it to death. It is a dangerous sport, as shown by the large number of casualties that occur in the chase.

All the inhabitants, including the dogs, were at the shore when the hunters brought in the carcasses which were cut up and divided among them.

Many days went by; how many is difficult to say for there were but an endless day. You ate when hungry and slept when tired. Everywhere one saw barren stones and ice. To save my clothes from wear I adopted anorak and kamiks.

I was sitting on the shore, engaged in the favorite pastime of the Eskimos, cracking lice, when I sighted a tiny black speck which, as it came nearer, I discerned to be the outlines of a ship struggling among the ice rocks to reach the shore. Finally, at anchor in the bay, it turned out to be a schooner bringing provisions from Upernavik in exchange for skins and blubber. When the rowboat pulled off shore toward the schooner for its return trip, the entire population was there to bid us "bon voyage," always a sad moment. But I noticed one female with a broad grin on her face—Katy, and she had evidently made it, she had a blue ribbon wrapped around her knob of coal black hair!

Back from the Arctic and still undecided about my future, that problem was solved by Mother's father, who owned shares in several sailing vessels and offered me a job on the three-masted schooner, *Fortuna*, then about to sail for Spitzbergen for a cargo of fish guano.

I was, to say the least, surprised on arrival when told my position aboard the schooner was to be that of cook—a title soon proved to be decidedly inappropriate for the mortal messes served the angry crew. The mate in particular, who had charge of provisions, came storming into the galley one day with a plate of stew in his hand, demanding, "How come whenever I order soup, you serve stew and vice versa?" When

I told him it was a simple matter to correct, merely by reversing the order, he splashed the stew in my face.

Once, however, he did compliment me on my cooking. This was during a storm when, overcome by seasickness, I accidentally vomited in the pea soup. After dinner he came to the galley and said to me, "Why isn't the rest of your stuff as good as your pea soup?"

On our return trip I was relieved from cooking when a tall wave, during a storm, swept galley pots and me overboard. It was only by having become entangled in a mass of rope and hauled aboard that my life was saved.

After a week at home I was hired as a messboy on the steamer "Laura," bound for Iceland. It was a rough and stormy voyage, very hard on the crockery, for which I was financially responsible. Back in Copenhagen after this trip my entire wages, plus ten Kroner, went to pay for the broken dishes. Father said it proved that my hands were not intended to handle delicate things but should be confined to the handling of more substantial materials such as lumber.

Next I was apprenticed to one of Copenhagen's foremost builders, a brusque, contentious man, who for a small sum agreed to teach me the carpenter's trade over a period of two years. The working hours were from six A.M. to six P.M. in the summertime, and during daylight hours in the winter. It was a most trying period. When I complained to Father about the long walk to the shop and the working hours, he said, "Your feet must make up for the deficiencies of your head," and added that I should be grateful, for, due to his clean way of life, I possessed a constitution well able to carry on. He never said a word about the mental situation. When I brought home the happy news that my test as a journeyman had been approved, Mother said she was sorry to include a workingman in our family. The only trouble was, there was no work to be found!



## PART IV

Although we called him "Uncle," he was not; he was Father's first cousin. After spending many years in America he had returned to spend his declining years in Denmark, where he bought his birthplace and turned it into a rooming house, naming it "Hotel Horn" displayed on a large sign, the top adorned with a pair of moose antlers.

He was a big hulk of a man, moving slovenly about on a pair of satchel feet, an extensive midsection, broad shoulders crowned with a rather small bald head; his eyes were close-set and piercing, cheeks and chin covered with a thick mass of flowing whiskers. A garrulous sort, bubbling over with gossip and suggestive humor. Only once do I recall seeing him upset; that was the time some joker on New Year's eve substituted the letter "e" for the "n" in the Hotel Horn sign. Mother dreaded his visits, which he always managed to arrange when we had nice company. But to us kids he spelled adventure and romance. The walls in his living room and hall were decorated with Indian headgear, tomahawks, scalps and peace pipes, guns and trophies of the hunt.

On Summer evenings he would move his American rocking chair out on the porch to sit and spin his tales of wonder; we would listen in awe to hair raising stories of narrow escapes from Apaches, stampedes of buffalo which he and his crony, Buffalo Bill, killed by the hundreds. As a trapper he was, to hear him tell it, the equal of Daniel Boone. It was years after I came to America that I learned the kind of trapping he had done—running a house of prostitution in Brooklyn! However, his stories were the main influence that brought me to America.

Toward the beginning of 1900 and nearly eighteen, Father gave his consent to my departure for America and

bought steerage passage on the old steamer *Norge*, bound for New York. Father, a very careful man, gave his close attention to all details in preparing my outfit, befitting my entrance into the Promised Land, resembling that of an American.

In one of Father's books was a picture of Abraham Lincoln, wearing a plug hat, a cloak and short leather boots. It took several trips to Copenhagen, rummaging through the second-hand clothing stores before we found a resemblance to the cloak, an ancient overcoat with a cape attached, once black but now turned green with age. The problem of the boots was settled by cutting a foot or so off the top of Father's old leather boots, but the question of the plug hat was a stumbler, which, Father said, ought to be decided by his cousin, who was an American and who also could teach me a bit of English. Though Mother protested, Uncle was invited for consultation.

Uncle's first objection was the overcoat; he advised a buckskin jacket would be more appropriate but lost the argument to Mother, who said the saltwater spray on crossing the Atlantic would shrink the buckskin. The headgear question was settled when Uncle promised to bring a coonskin cap with a tail attached. He also advised a straight passage to Chicago, which, he said, was an old Indian trading post, with a great future. His lessons in English, leaning toward the profane, proved worthless except in extreme circumstances.

Granny brought over two carpet bags, one side done in needlepoint, with a yellow circle in the center and with my initials in *petit point*, done with her very own hands. Mother sewed one gold twenty and a five-dollar coin on the back side of my heavy woolen underwear, with instructions not to remove them before I arrived in New York, as the immigration law required each immigrant to be in possession of twenty four dollars. My sister contributed three pairs of knee-high heavy wool socks.

A couple of days before my departure we had a gathering

of the clan. After consuming a few schnapps, Uncle related some of his exploits and concluded by bellowing an old Danish song, "The Flight to America," which consisted of several verses, one of which he sang with deep feeling, and, translated ran something like this:

You sit in a rocking chair all day long,  
Smoke cigars that are good and strong;  
Spit on the floor wherever you please—  
All in contentment and peace.

Mother said he must have practiced a lot on that, from the look of his broad behind. Then Father made me dress in my outfit and all agreed I looked like a real American. Envious glances from a couple of my chums, who had come to bid me good-bye, gave me added assurance. By that time Uncle was fast asleep.

After the guests departed, Father called me into the dining room for a bit of advice. Never join any secret organizations, gamble or use alcoholic beverages, beware of immoral women. For passionate moments before wedlock, he recommended a basin of cold water.

The evening before my departure I was standing by the entrance gate of the old house when the storekeeper from across the road came bursting out of his front door in pursuit of his wife, whom he occasionally gave a good battering, so some said, for no earthly reason at all. Father had often said he wished someone would give this fellow a dose of his own medicine.

Now here was a chance to grant Father his wish, teach the storekeeper a lesson and perhaps save his wife from further punishment. Stepping between the onrushing couple I met the storekeeper with a left hook that made his knees buckle and was about to finish the job with a right to the jaw when some object swung by his wife hit me on the back of my head, temporarily depriving me of mental activity. It was probably the first time in many a moon that both had exerted themselves in unity on a single endeavor. When the

melée was over I had two black eyes, a torn ear and both lapels torn off my new coat.

On arriving home and telling about my experience, Father said, "It serves you right for meddling in other people's affairs." Since then I have always made it a point never to interfere in domestic quarrels.

## PART V

Three days after Christmas I boarded the *Norge* for my great adventure. My only disappointment was Father's refusal to let me take along my old Spanish muzzle-loader.

Steerage accommodations were a large room on the lower deck, occupied by a hundred or more immigrants who slept in close-spaced three-tier bunks. A steep stair led through a hatch from the upper deck and at mealtime a couple of sailors brought down a large caldron filled with a most unpalatable stew which they ladled out on a tin plate held by each man in a rather thin queue. Due to the stormy weather many of the passengers, who were peasants, had stuffed themselves with home-made sausages and goodies before leaving and, now on a rebound floating on the deck, created a terrible stench. Although we were not allowed on the upper deck on account of the stormy weather, I managed to sneak up for a breath of fresh air. Passing the galley where the food for the cabin passengers was prepared, a whiff of the cook's culinary art tantalized my nostrils. Yielding to temptation, I leaned over the half-door as the cook was basting a big fat goose, my favorite dish, and, forgetting the promise made to Mother about the money in my underwear, I made a bargain with the cook for food at fifty cents a meal. From then on most of my meals were eaten in the galley storeroom. After a twenty-one-day journey, my underwear-bank had shrunk to six dollars.

Despite the excitement among the immigrants, who were all on deck gazing in mute rapture at the Statue of Liberty, I must confess she didn't look so hot to me—not with my visions of a return trip to Denmark as *persona non grata*, all on account of a fat goose! After the *Norge* dropped anchor, a boat came alongside with the health and immigration of-



ficials and, after inspection, we were herded in a boat and taken to the newly constructed Ellis Island.

A farmer, returning from a visit to Denmark, to whom I spoke about my financial predicament, advised me to declare my profession as farmer. Said he, "They are simply crazy about farmers in America." When my turn came to appear before the Danish-speaking inspector and told him about my six dollars, he sadly shook his head. I already had the carpet bag in my hands ready for my return when he asked about my trade: I replied, "farmer." For proof he demanded that my hands be extended and, observing a few callouses, he motioned me to join the line of immigrants to be taken to trains for distribution to their destinations. On the boat ride to the city I got another and different look at the old girl with the torch and have felt a reverent regard for her ever since.

At the railway station we were shoved into a day coach. I placed my bags on the overhead rack and made myself comfortable on a wooden seat. Soon a colored man appeared at the entrance door with an armful of packages. He wore a cap with a gold braid and a patent leather visor, which in Denmark spells authority. Nobody understood the speech streaming from his big mouth, but loved his benevolent smile as he walked through the aisle tossing a paper box in each's passenger's lap. Always of an inquisitive nature I opened the package and found it full of chocolate candy. I had heard Uncle tell of "free lunch," though he never mentioned free candy. Halfway through the box the man returned, held one finger in the air and said "One dollar." I paid, of course, leaving me with a roll of four dollars. The train was a combination passenger and freight which stopped at every hamlet, coupling and uncoupling cars. Every backward jerk slid us off the seats and opened the door of the stove's ash compartment, spewing clouds of dust into the car. When the train was in motion smoke and cinders came flying through the leaky windows and before long we looked like Africans.

The first day out my time was spent gazing at the wintry landscape and, seeing no Indians, decided they must live in the interior. On the second night, while I was dozing in my seat, the train came to a dead stop; someone opened the door and yelled "Buffalo!" At last a stampede! Gosh, here I was without my muzzle-loader and had to be content with a look. I sprang up and out through the open door to gaze with disappointment on a large railway station with flickering flames from kerosene lamps reflecting through many windows. I returned sadly to my seat.

It was 11 P.M., January 24 and ten below zero when the train made its final stop at the Van Buren Street Station in Chicago. Except for a few white slavers looking for prospects among the female immigrants, the station was empty. Tired, dirty, and hungry, I placed my bags on the floor, flopped on a bench and fell fast asleep, but briefly, as I was rudely awakened by a man in uniform pounding on the soles of my boots with a club. His avalanche of words, "all Greek to me," was followed by grabbing my bags with one hand and reaching for my arm with the other. Thanks to Uncle's warning about "robbers in disguise," I was on my feet in a wink and smashed a right to his belly. This brought a cry of agony from him and two more men in uniform, who lifted me bodily, carried me to the door and tossed me on the street just as a thunderous roar from above shook the earth like a quake. At first I thought the station had collapsed, but from my horizontal position saw it was a train, running on an elevated steel structure.

My walk down the dark and desolate street brought me to a side street with lights shining from many windows. The letters on the street spelled "South Clark Street." Turning down this street I noticed "Hotel Stockholm" painted on a large plate glass window and decided to go in. A fellow, opening the door in exit, breathed out an aroma of food and beer. On entering my eyes fell on the free lunch that Uncle had talked about so much. Advancing toward the bartender I lifted my coonskin cap, bowed from the waist down,

"as only a Dane can do," at the same time announcing in my best Swedish, "I've just arrived from Copenhagen." He never gave me a rumple, whereupon I placed my bags on the floor and went to work on the lunch. After a few gulps the bartender brought a chair and invited me to make myself comfortable, which required another bow. But—a moment later he returned with a rubber hose and gave me a hard whack on my back. This called for quick action, so, hurling my six-foot brawny frame on the bartender. I landed him among the brass spittoons behind the footrail. The commotion brought the owner from the rear; armed with a club, raised above his head ready to strike and, releasing a frightful Swedish oath, he rushed furiously toward me. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks, for he recognized in me a greenhorn, a subject for exploitation, and, following the exchange of a few sentences his offer of a job at three dollars a week and a place to sleep and free lunch was accepted on the spot. After finishing the lunch the dour-faced bartender led me upstairs to a small room furnished with a rickety bed and a ditto washstand. In a moment I was fast asleep, unaware of being in a bordello in Chicago's notorious tenderloin district!

In the morning the owner gave me instructions on how to clean the floors, shine the brass spittoons, make the beds and set free lunch on the table. Back of the barroom was a hall with an elevated stage in the rear; tables and chairs were set on a sawdust-sprinkled floor. Late afternoon and evening the place was patronized by prostitutes and their clients, drinking while listening to sordid jokes and songs of the stage performers, while a hunchback strummed an ancient piano. Upstairs were six small chambers used by the trulls for entertaining, at one dollar a throw, of which half went to the owner. On busy evenings there were lines waiting for the favorites. After each service the rickety beds were remade.

Back of the free lunch table was a padlocked closet containing the makings for the free lunch. On opening the door, several rats scampered away from a large cheese and sausages

hanging on a rack covered with cockroaches, nonchalantly brushed off with the palm of the owner's hand, cured my desire for free lunch and only the good nature of the trulls saved me from starving. After two weeks, on approaching the owner for my wages, he threatened me with deportation if the subject was brought up again.

Early one morning, disregarding the threat, I walked to the elevated station and took the first train that came along. After an hour's ride, gazing through the windows, my attention was drawn to a sign that read "Paulsen's Lumber Yard." "Paulsen" was a good old Danish name, so, alighting at the next stop and walking back to the yard, I sought a job. This resulted in Mr. Paulson promising me a job at six dollars a week, with the privilege of sleeping in the shop's shavings, but with a warning not to smoke.

On my return to the Hotel Stockholm, the owner happened to be absent, which gave me a chance to run upstairs and get my bags. On my way down a Swedish immigrant girl from the *Norge* was coming upstairs with a customer.

It was the "home rush" hour when I made my entrance in the elevated train, nearly losing one of my bags from the pressure of hurrying crowds. It looked as if an exodus from the city for some reason or other was in progress, the way everybody dashed and pushed. Evidently it was nothing serious, however, as everybody near at hand laughed and giggled in my direction, so, when someone spoke to me my answer was a shake of the head.

At the end of the line, without noticing Paulsen's sign en route, a return trip to Clark Street Station was necessary. After riding four different trains to the end of the line I glimpsed Paulsen's sign and got off, tossed my bags over the tail gate into the lumber yard and went back to the elevated station, where I spent the balance of the night by the pot-belly stove. In the morning my last dime was spent for a dozen crullers before I reported for work.

It wasn't long after acquiring a limited English vocabulary from reading signs and illustrated advertising that I



discovered there was something far more interesting in America than killing Indians. During the experimental period of my Americanization, outstanding was the impression I gained of individual freedom and the observation of immigrants established in profitable undertakings illustrated the fact that honest endeavour can pave the road to success as far as a person's ability can carry him. What greater privileges can a person ask?

On my last visit to Denmark I laid a rose on the grave of the old prevaricator whose unconscionable stories led me, an ambitious youth of eighteen, to set sail for the land of adventure and excitement.

\* \* \* \*

It was with an impressive gesture that Mr. Paulsen handed me my first week's pay, six brand new silver dollars, also a copy of the local weekly Danish newspaper in which appeared some rooms-for-rent advertisements.

Mr. Lund, from whom I rented a room, made a meager living concocting a putrid cheese-and-spice specialty, which he molded into a small cone-shaped form, labelled it "Appetite cheese" and sold in quantity to delicatessen stores.

At the close of my work day I joined Mr. Lund in his cellar work shop. Turning the handle on a meat grinder, through which cheese and maggots were run, I listened while Lund told stories of his travels in America. When our feet became numb and cold from standing on the earthen floor, we took a stroll down the street to pick a plank or two from the wooden sidewalk, or a few of the round cedar blocks from the street paving. Back in the cellar, we lighted the stove for a hot cup of tea. Lund was then at his best; there no contradicting, nasty remarks from his wife, who was always belittling him with a superior air, which she had assumed from the time she mingled in high society as a chambermaid on Fifth Avenue. A tart-tongued woman was Mrs. Lund, who always bemoaned the day she had given the air to a polished lad who later made a success dealing in



merchandise, and had given preference to Lund, whose only polish was the seat of his pants, which always smelled of cheese.

It was Mr. Lund who suggested I discard Father's idea of American raiments, "which left no doubt as to a green-horn," and nothing I desired more than to look like an American. "First of all," he said, "you need a pair of shoes, but they are expensive, and will cost near three dollars; they may go down in price later on, as I have just read in a newspaper where a young man in New York has invented a machine that can manufacture twenty-five pairs of shoes a day. Take for example that young whipper-snapper, Hearst whose presses turnout newspapers, sold at a profit of one cent a piece. There is no doubt that we are now in the machine age. What about the washing machine the woman across the street bought recently, you pump the handle an hour or so and the clothes come out snow white. And goodness knows what that man Edison is up to with all his electrical experiments. You landed in America at the right moment."

Came springtime, when a young man's fancy turns to something or other. Mine turned to the frontier and the wide open spaces that Lund talked so much about. Train travel was expensive and walking across the continent was out of the question as entailing too great physical exertion. But Lund supplied an answer to the problem in his travel narrations and was prompt in offering his assistance.

At Canal and Madison Streets, "Chicago's skid row," employment offices, for a fee of one dollar, offered many jobs on various railroads. After visiting several such places, Lund selected for me a mule-skinner job near Edgely, North Dakota. I was given instructions to be at the railroad station at 6 P.M. "This," Lund told me, "will land you in the harvest fields, where wages are high, but be sure to get off the train a few stations before reaching Edgely or they will make you a mule skinner." That afternoon was spent purchasing a pair of shoes.

It was a sorry looking assemblage of rabble the employ-

ment agent herded into the old dilapidated coach, attached to a combination passenger and freight train. Arriving in Minneapolis the following morning, two burly individuals armed with a baseball bat, stationed themselves at each entrance door of the coach, one bellowing the harangue, "Listen, boes! Me and my partner are here to see that each and everyone of youse gits to Edgely. The first one tries to leave this coach will spend the rest of his life with a cracked skull!"

It went very well until we reached Morehead, Minnesota, when one of the crew managed to open a coach window and took a head dive to liberty. One of the guards gave chase, then bedlam broke loose with a scramble to get out through the unguarded door. My departure was delayed in the search for and loss of my paper-wrapped package containing all of my worldly goods. When the rumpus was over the sole occupants of the coach were a dead drunk hobo and yours truly.

When the guards left the coach for a chat with the brakeman at Lisbon, North Dakota, I made a dash through the open door and sprinted down the tracks, coming to a river, the Cheyenne. Sliding down the bank, I hid in the bushes until I heard the train start puffing on its way.

Down the river was a hobo camp. Some hoboes were cooking a stew over a bonfire; others were bathing in the river while the lice were boiling off their clothes in a battered old tin wash tub. One graciously offered me some stew and coffee, served in an old tomato can. After the meal, there was a discussion about current wages and music was furnished by the owner of a harmonica. At dusk we piled new mown hay into an empty box car to sleep on. It was pleasant to sleep breathing that delightful fresh, fragrant aroma but very unpleasant to find on awakening that someone had stolen my shoes. My last fifty cents went to the local shoemaker for a well worn pair of shoes someone had discarded.

Next morning several farmers came to the jungle to hire help to cut and shock their grain. One of them, a grisly old

farmer, approached and hired me. At the livery stable he hitched a pair of skinny pintos to a buggy and set out over the prairie.

As we rode along he commented on my foreign accent. After telling him about recently having arrived from Denmark he remarked, "You are lucky to get away from there. This," he declared, "is the greatest country in the world. And lucky I was to land in North Dakota, the finest state in the Union. Here we grow the tallest wheat in the country and raise the fastest horses. And on top of that, I am here in Ransom County, which won all the blue ribbons at the State Fair." After a moment of silence he shifted his quid, spat, and pointed his whip toward a house in the distance and informed me, "That's my farm, the best dog-gone farm in Ransom County."

If the short, stiff wheat stubble that pierced the thin soles of my shoes indicated "good land" he was right. By night my feet looked like a pair of raw hamburgers. He brought me back to the jungle next morning, now deserted with the exception of a seedy looking character, who was sitting on the ground in his dirty underpants, bathing the syphilistic sores on his legs with Glover's Mange cure.

Kansas Slim was a soft spoken man who had seen better days as a lawyer in a small Kansas town. Unwilling to shoulder the responsibilities of his profession or any other, he had sought solace in alcohol, gradually wrecked his practice and then left his wife and two children to become a hobo. He followed the customary routine of the Middle West hobo, from harvest field to the northern lumber camps, or spending the winter on "skid row" in some large city. Between harvesting and lumbering there was the usual stop-over in Minneapolis where these wanderers headed for a saloon, where jack rollers soon relieved them of their cash.

It must have been my robust look that persuaded Slim to offer me a partnership, which he did with the proviso that we were to hire out as a team only. In the eighteen months we traveled over the country together, mostly in box cars,

always looking for greener pastures, Slim depended a lot on my youth and evident physical strength to procure jobs, seldom kept longer than a day or two, to earn enough cash to carry us to our next destination. On the other hand, he was an excellent tutor in English and knew how to wangle good wages and to hitch onto both passenger and freight trains.

Mr. Egos' threshing outfit consisted of numerous wagon teams. A straw-fed steam engine furnished power to the thrasher, also pulling it from job to job. A gang of hoboes pitched the wheat bundles from the shocks in the field onto a wagon which hauled and fed them into the separator's mouth, where a rotating steel cylinder, spiked with iron teeth, pounded the kernel from the stalk. On occasion a tired hobo would slip a rock into a bundle, which raised havoc with the teeth, their replacement giving the hobo an hour or more rest. The main attraction for the hoboes was a large cook shanty on wheels, which released an agreeable odor of frying food. Work hours were from sunrise to sunset. In most outfits the crew slept on the straw stack or in barns. Our crew slept in a large tent on heaps of straw. On rainy days there was a continual poker game going on, with one fellow in particular a constant winner. The old Swede cook had a mighty breakfast of pork sausages and pancakes ready of mornings, which we devoured by stacks and stacks, the first good meal some of the crew had eaten in a long while. I knew then that Lund was right when he had said, "There are enough pancakes baked every morning in America to cover all of Denmark."

One late afternoon a covered wagon, followed by a cloud of dust, came jolting down the dirt road and made a stop. A man got out, unhitched the team and put the horses to pasture. A bit later he walked up to a worker in the field and announced he had two fine looking wenches in the wagon who were open for engagement, also a fair supply of grain alcohol: if any of the boys cared to sample his fine products, he told the worker, he was camping there for the night. After



work Slim led the parade: we found him in the field the next morning sleeping off a drunk.

It was Slim who was accused of slipping a rock in a bundle and that afternoon was paid off and told to get to hell out. To keep my agreement with him, as much as I hated to do it, I asked for and received my two weeks' pay. "Just as well," said Slim, "the pay is better up around Devil's Lake."

We rode a freight to Fargo, where Slim walked across the Red River bridge to West Moorhead and the next morning came back busted. My money, with the exception of two dollars, I sent to Lund, who opened a savings account in my name in the Stensland Bank.

Slim and I climbed the blind baggage car on a fast mail and received a cold bath from the fireman when he came to hose down the coal in the tender. Before coming into the station at Grand Fork we jumped the train, right into the arms of a yard cop, who gave us a merry chase through the yard. Next evening, on the same scheduled train, we came prepared, each with a short board. Just as the train started we placed the boards diagonally across the rods under the car floor. It proved to be a most uncomfortable ride. The gyrating dust and cinders from the road bed penetrated the skin on our faces and hands, and it was several weeks after we arrived in Devil's Lake before we again looked like white men.

With the first snow we left the threshing outfit, bought railroad tickets to Minneapolis. Perhaps the lumber camps were getting too strenuous for Slim, for he decided on a trip to the south. Though it was not as far south as we desired, we got jobs as section hands near St. Joseph, Missouri. We never went near the job, though, but continued right through to Kansas City. There Slim introduced me to the Salvation Army, which furnished free sleeping space on the floor and a most insipid soup in exchange for a few hallelujahs at their evening services.

My instructions were to wait in Kansas City until Slim returned from a spying expedition to his home town, which



must have been very depressing, for on his return he went on a terrible bender.

The next year was spent riding in box cars in between a variety of jobs. When I questioned Slim as to our next destination, he usually replied, "Utopia."

It was on a hot day at a way station on the Santa Fe in Arizona, while waiting for a freight going East, that I approached a dilapidated shack in the desert to ask for a drink of water, a scarce commodity in that region. An old man came to the door and, after a drink, inquired, "Where are you heading?" "No place in particular," I answered.

"Why not here, where it is dry and warm?" he suggested. "I used to live in Brooklyn, got too crowded and damp. Good place here for rheumatism; never find a better place."

I told him about Slim and Utopia.

"Utopia?" he said as he reached for a tattered one-volume Encyclopedia on a wall shelf and opened it, turned some pages and said: "It says right here 'Utopia is an imaginary island, having a perfect social and political life,' Kind of communistic," he added as he closed and replaced the volume on its shelf. Seating himself again he went on, "There just ain't no such animal; been tried in many places and always turned out a flop. Utopia is within yourself; you can establish it any time and place you've a mind to."

I went back and told Slim what the old man had said; also told him, "I'm going back to Chicago."

"You're both crazy," Slim said. "I'm heading for St. Louis to help build the World's Fair."

So Slim and I bade each other "good bye" and went our separate ways.

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Mr. Lund was glad to see me on my return trip to Chicago but had sad news for me. Stensland, president of the bank in which my savings of two hundred and fifty dollars had been deposited, had absconded with the funds of the bank and headed for Lybia in Africa, which nation had no

extradition treaty with the U.S. The press gave lengthy and exciting reports on the progress of State's Attorney Olsen, who was sent in pursuit, missing his quarry by moments. However, Olsen finally caught Stensland in Italy aboard a fishing smack about to sail for Lybia. Many months passed before I received a fraction of my deposit!

## PART VI

The owner of a saw and hammer had no trouble in obtaining a job as a carpenter. Chicago's developers were laying wooden sidewalks by the mile on the outlying prairie, dividing it into twenty-five foot plots. The job I was first assigned to was as a carpenter on a strip of cheap frame houses along Milwaukee Avenue.

One day while we were working on a tall scaffold several men entered the building and started to break our tool boxes, the while yelling "scab! scab!", then dispersed in all directions. A week later the performance was repeated. On my way home from work I was approached by the business agent from the union, who urged me to join it, or else, he promised, other things besides tool boxes would be broken.

A few weeks after joining, the carpenters went on strike, demanding an increase in wages from three to four dollars a day. Lund said it was no use to bother with unions; he had lost a good job with the Pullman Company when he went on strike.

Through an ad in the News I obtained a carpenter's job from Zeigler Leiter, who was about to build an entire town on a tract of land in southern Illinois with soft coal a few feet below the surface. I boarded with a Georgia cracker, who wore the stickiest clothes and filthiest tobacco-stained beard ever. He furnished accommodations for twelve persons in a rented seven-room hovel. All our meals consisted of sowbelly, cornbread, potatoes and molasses, and the meals were preceded by a long windy prayer by the cracker, with a song at the end of the meal by his two pipe-smoking daughters, whose favorite and oft repeated tune was "Lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine."

When the houses, more like shacks, were finished the

town was named Zeigler and encircled by a high wire fence, with armed guards stationed at each entrance. Non-union miners were employed, who paid high rent for the shacks and Park Avenue prices for their provisions in the company's store. This town later became a bloody battleground between the company guards and union miners.

The Chicago Bridge and Iron Works, which was building a water tank in Zeigler and offering four dollars a day, next engaged my services, but it was a dangerous job working high in the air on four-inch girders. I was about to quit when I received a letter from Jensine, a plump girl from Jutland, whom I had met at a dance in the Danish Young Peoples Home. We had had several dates and were quite fond of each other. She had quit her job as a salesgirl in a bakery shop and was then staying at her sister's home; the latter's husband wasn't working and had been collecting Jensine's wages for some time. It was all very melancholy, enough to arouse in me the pensive mood of a protector.

\* \* \* \*

My special delivery letter to Jensine proposing marriage received a favorable answer by return mail. I left the next day for Chicago and Mr. Lund, in whom I confided my matrimonial intentions. He knew Jensine and did not speak in terms of ecstasy about my plan, but, on the contrary, pointed out the disparity in our backgrounds and dispositions, calling it a wedding of the pepper pot and vinegar cruets. He related his own case "for better or worse," where the last word in that phrase had predominated in practice but, however, the general cussedness and contrariness of the female of the species as potential mates, as far as young foreigners were concerned, were limited to the menials, yet one must settle in life some time or other; he knew Jensine to be a good cook and thought I might do worse, but, for a person in my position, certainly not better.

Three days later, on November 4, 1904, Jensine and I were married by a magistrate in Chicago City Hall. Mr. Lund

acted as a witness and presented us with a wedding gift of a dozen "appetite cheeses." After the ceremony we bought a few pieces of furniture from an installment house, which were sent to Franklin Park where I had rented part of the top floor of an old farmhouse owned by the village milkman, who occupied the first floor. A few days later I got a job as a carpenter in the village foundry.

Franklin Park is a small village located about thirty miles northwest of Chicago. Its only industry was an iron foundry owned by a Mr. Draper, a staunch, conservative Republican, high in Masonry and who was then, and for many years had been, the village mayor, due to his threats to close the foundry if a Democrat was elected mayor.

Our landlord, McNally, a Cork man, hated Mr. Draper, his broad "A" and low wages and decided to do something about it. Not a man of letters and unacquainted with the art of politics, he sought the advice of McAuliffe, who had recently opened a bar in the village and who, among other dubious qualities, was blessed with the gift of gab. McNally now spent most of his spare time in the bar, planning on a strategy to oust Mr. Draper at the coming election. Political propaganda, spiced with subtle insinuations of malfeasance in office, was dispensed on both sides of the bar, impregnated with beers on the house. At the Democratic caucus, held in the rear of the saloon, McAuliffe was nominated for mayor. First on the agenda was the unionizing of the foundry workers, a large glass of beer for a nickel and a better free lunch. McNally's poetical gifts were drafted to compose a campaign ditty.

"Goodby, Mr. Draper  
Farewell to you  
You'll be defeated  
By the I.M.U. (Iron Moulders Union)"

As election day drew near, many hideous looking characters came to the village; some slept in McNally's barn, others on the floor in McAuliffe's saloon.



The excitement ran high on election day. A barrel of beer with a tin cup attached to the barrel on a chain was loaded on McNally's farm wagon and slowly driven around town. It was by far the greatest attraction, proved by the number that fell by the wayside. It was only babies that suffered from thirst that day and that was because they were completely forgotten by McNally. The better element, harassed by the hideous display, approached the polls with caution or remained home behind locked doors. The result was an overwhelming defeat for Mr. Draper, but the foundry kept on going. McAuliffe bought a gold star with his name and "Mayor" engraved on it; his free lunch became crackers and cheese, his beer a teaser. McNally raised the price of his milk to nine cents a quart, and Mr. Draper dispensed with my services.

Jensine and I packed our few belongings and moved to Austin, then a suburb of Chicago, where I worked as a carpenter. It was off-season and the work unsteady, but we managed to pull through the winter, by the grace of our landlord and grocer.

Sauntering down the street, my pocket lined with my first week's pay to cover our debt to the landlord, who kept a butcher shop nearby, I found him about to leave to attend an auction held by a Mr. Cummings, "Chicago's premier realty operator," who was auctioning off a tract of land between Division and Augusta Streets in Austin. His invitation to join him I first refused because Jensine was expecting me back with some groceries, but when he mentioned that Mr. Cummings served free beer and sandwiches with music by a three-piece orchestra, I threw all caution to the wind and accepted.

The auction was held in an enormous tent filled to capacity with men who all seemed very thirsty. After several samplings from the bar and lunch table the assembled crowd was seated on benches, while the orchestra played a few soothing tunes, after which Mr. Cummings strode to the rostrum where he gave an outline on the terms of sale and

delivered an emphatic speech on real estate, the foundation of all wealth, mentioning Hetty Green and other avaricious characters, following which the auction started.

Later on, when the landlord mentioned it was about time for another beer and I was nodding my approval of his suggestion, Mr. Cummings pointed a finger in my direction and yelled, "Sold to the young man over there!" My surprised and disturbed look prompted him to add in a sort of low sarcastic tone, "I wouldn't give a hoot in Hell for any American who don't want to own part of it!"

Although I owed my landlord two months' rent and a five dollar meat bill, he was kind enough to advance ten dollars to make the required ten percent down payment. Back home with news of the big event—but no groceries—Jensine gave a howl of despair followed by a flood of tears and reproachful comments on the uncertainty of my temperament and the uncertainty of times, and also that her uncle had died in a poor house, all of which served to cause a big dent in my enthusiasm. Sleep that night was fitful. The grocer, the landlord and Mr. Cummings, waiving their unpaid bills, paraded through my dreams, till Jensine wakened me with the announcement that she had labor pains!

Sprinting down the dark street for the midwife, I heard the patter of feet behind me and cries of "Halt!" Continuing, I heard a shot. Two burly policemen had mistaken me for a burglar and refused to listen to my excited, indistinct explanation and hauled me to the station. When I explained my mission to the sergeant, he furnished me with an escort.

I held Jensine's hand while she gave birth on October 8, 1906 to our son, whom we named Erik. The midwife handed me our scrubbing pail containing the afterbirth with instructions to bury it in the back yard. On my return, the midwife was frantically searching for the baby, finally locating him, almost suffocated, under a pile of blankets, just as our dog came dragging the afterbirth back into the room.

It was winter with the usual irregular working hours in the building trade. We found it difficult to meet our living

expenses, let alone the six dollar monthly payment on the lot, which extended over a period of almost three years and brought a bucket of Jensine's tears with each instalment, along with bitter comments on pouring money down a drain, rather than purchasing necessary items, like a crib or a baby carriage.

My letter to Mr. Cumings' office, offering to relinquish my interest in the lot was answered by his lawyer, who stated that he intended to enforce the terms of the contract, 'if necessary, by law.'

That evening, while the druggist was preparing my headache powder, an elderly gentleman stopped in to ask if he knew of anyone who would tear down an old frame house for the lumber. If he had possessed an Aladdin's lamp his wish couldn't have been gratified faster. Fear of the druggist answering "yes" compelled me to yell, "Yes, *me!*" A bargain was struck on the spot and sealed by several beers in the saloon across the street.

On returning home, the smirk on my face and a whiff of my breath convinced Jensine there was something in the making. Averse to her curtain lectures, I maintained silence about my project in spite of threats and attempted intimidation. Her curiosity was intense when I left before daybreak the following morning with a crow bar and a hammer in my hand.

It was almost Spring; the old house was torn down and the lumber and bricks carted to our lot by wheelbarrow before she found out what it was all about. When I refused to sell the lumber and deposit the cash in the bank in her name, she renounced any connections whatsoever with the project.

My spare moments were now spent in erecting a small four-room cottage, with a cedar post foundation, but there was a lot of waste in the old lumber, barely enough to sheath the exterior walls. When the rafters were up, there was no lumber or cash left.

The unfinished house, with the rafters pointing toward

Heaven as if praying for their nakedness to be covered became an obsession and I was then about ready to admit Jensine was right.

My bitter disappointment was somewhat eased when I passed a real estate office on the plate glass window of which was printed in large gilt letters, "Money to Loan." I went in. The person in charge was very solicitous and after listening to my story he promised me an eight hundred dollar mortgage, from which two hundred dollars were to be deducted to satisfy Cummings' contract, that alone giving me great relief. However, I became a bit confused when he stated that I was to bring "the abstract" to his office. When he explained its shape and purpose, it dawned on me that the abstract was the large pamphlet sent me by Mr. Cumings and which I had thrown into the garbage can. When I told him this, he assured me that a duplicate could be obtained for a mere fifty dollars or so.

When I told Jensine about the mortgage and the abstract a strange look came into her eyes—the kind you give a person at the moment you sink a stiletto in his back—as she cried, "Every day we get deeper in debt and in need of the bare necessities! Why, we could live a month or two for the cost of that old abstract, whatever it is!" She grabbed the dictionary and looked up the definition. "Just as I thought," she declared, "It says 'considered apart from concrete'—same as your head! You may be a good man with a hammer, but in business you're a bungler."

By working on holidays and before and after regular work hours I managed to finish and move into our new home by midsummer. Under protest from Jensine I hung a "For Sale" sign on the side of the house and it wasn't long before an elderly couple came along who liked it—or perhaps it was the fifteen hundred dollar price.

At the moment I was handing the buyer the purchase receipt Jensine came into the house with an armful of groceries. She was surprised indeed to find herself without a house. There were the usual tears, bemoaning the day she



refused Karl Holm, who was now a business agent for the Cement Finishers Union.

After closing the deal on the sale of the house, we moved into a ground floor apartment on 51 Court.

There was a tingly feeling of Fall in the air, which added to my ambition. A job was unthinkable now that I had been introduced to the rudiments of business and the intricacies of contracts and mortgages. A real estate broker submitted two plots on 51 Court, which could be bought on the second-mortgage plan, waiving priority to a first mortgage, a scheme invented by the "platepassers" and foreclosure crowd. If the builder fails to finish the house for lack of cash or other reasons, there is a chance to get the plot back by foreclosure, with all the improvements thereon.

Seeing that I hesitated to risk my modest capital, the broker unleashed his high pressure sales talk, explaining that all successful industry and business practices were carried on with other people's money.

"If you really want to go to town," said he, "just spend fifty dollars on incorporating, issue stock certificates and sell them to your friends, incidentally putting yourself on a fat salary, so that if everything goes to pot, you're still ahead of the game! If you're just a piker, pocket the first payment on the construction loan—you can't get arrested for that. And," he added, "don't worry about those material men; they're so hungry for money they can't see a dollar if there's a nickel hanging in front of it."

I fell like a ton of bricks!

Eventually the two houses were well under construction and ready for the first payment on the construction loan. I had been too busy driving nails to notice that the 1907 panic had struck. When I arrived at the bank for the payment the banker said, where have you been? Don't you know there is a panic on and all assets are frozen?"

A fellow sufferer on the same kind of errand informed me that it was Teddy Roosevelt who had brought the panic about when he started meddling in the insurance companies'



business. They in turn had withdrawn their money from the banks.

The next three months were sad indeed, playing hide and seek with creditors, one of whom served me with a mechanic's lien. Reading the important-looking document aloud to Jensine I misread the word "lien" as "line," both of us puzzled as to its meaning. She said, "It may have something to do with what the man said to me when he called you a shoestring builder."

It was now Winter and building operations were at a standstill. To support the family I took up wrestling, a sport I had excelled in in Denmark, proficient enough to appear at the Coliseum, the Trocadero and other burlesque shows on Friday sports night at fifteen dollars a bout. My only defeat was by the middleweight champion, Walter Willoughby.

\* \* \* \*

The parish priest came passing by my two unfinished houses one day and noticing me sitting idle on the stoop, he inquired why I wasn't working. Knowing him to be trained to listen sympathetically to peoples' troubles, I told him my story. When I finished, he said he would speak to a couple of his parishioners who were contemplating the purchase of a home in that vicinity. A week or so later he brought two couples, who, after a lot of dickering, made me the shabby offer of eighteen hundred dollars per house. Not knowing how long the panic would last and rather than lose all by foreclosure, their offer was accepted. When all outstanding debts were satisfied, my capital was reduced to three hundred dollars.

Mr. Lund was right when he said that the first thousand dollars were the hardest to make, but he forgot to mention that they were a darn sight harder to keep!

My landlord, who was a nut on precision, resented my catch-as-catch-can rent payments and intimidated that he would be very happy if I sought quarters elsewhere. I took the hint and we were about to move to new quarters when

our second son was born, December 2, 1908. We named him Johannes in honor of my father.

The hazards and pitfalls of a shoestring builder, continually skating on thin ice, were getting me down and ready to concede that Jensine was right. We bought a baby carriage and other household necessities for the home and I got a job as a carpenter. The morning I was to report to work was cold and frosty. Jensine was in good humor now that I had knuckled down to her demands and was overflowing with amiability as she poured the coffee and placed my shoes in the wood stove's oven—perhaps to keep me from getting cold feet. We were surprised on opening the oven door to find my only pair of shoes burned to a crisp!

It was nine o'clock that morning before a store opened where I could buy a pair of shoes and eleven before I reported on the job, where the boss informed me he only employed men who reported to work on time.

Stopping in a saloon on my way home, I met Mr. Duffy, who kept a real estate office in my neighborhood. A suave fellow, known for his aggressive methods, blessed with the gift of gab and the manners, if not the principles, of a gentleman, the formality of his approach impressed me greatly, used as I was to answering to "hey" or "hunkie." When he placed his arm around my shoulders and said, "Mr. Petersen, I believe?" it had the immediate effect of elevating me considerably in my own estimation.

Sure, he said, he had seen me build three houses, single handed, but that was not the way to success. "You never get anywhere working with your hands," he told me, "let the blockheads do that while you are doing the scheming. I've had you in mind for some time as a man who deserves a break. If you listen to me you'll be going back to Sweden in no time with a fortune."

I said, "When do we start?"

He replied, "Listen; I have an entire square block of land right across the street from where you live that I can sell

you on second-mortgage plan and get a first mortgage large enough to cover the cost of building."

"In the first place," I interposed, "I am no Swede. In the second place I have no money to finance a building program with and, in the third place, my wife won't let me."

"Let us examine those objections, he said smoothly, "being broke is excellent since in that case you can't lose anything. As far as your wife's objections are concerned, here is a chance now to make up your mind whether you're going to be a poodlepusher or the man in your own home." And added, "I beg your pardon, I never knew you were a Norwegian, but meet me in my office tomorrow morning and I'll show you how to cash in on your building experience."

It was quite a blow to Jensine when I gave her a detailed account of the happenings of the day, particularly when I told her about my appointment with Mr. Duffy, who, she said, must be a very ignorant man when he didn't even know the difference between a Swede and a Dane.

Mr. Duffy inflated my ego almost to the bursting point with his flattering introduction of me to the owner of the plots of land as the district's "most reliable and progressive builder," which, however, didn't seem to make much of an impression on him, as he stood firm on his stiff price. After much wrangling, an appointment was made to close the deal at the owner's lawyer's office the following morning.

Mr. Murphy, who resided somewhere in Ireland, was in Chicago at that time to dispose of several parcels of land willed to him by an uncle. My purchase was the last parcel of the lot and the only one sold on the second mortgage plan. It was several hours before the deal was closed, because the lawyer's secretary had failed to appear for work that morning.

Somewhat inexperienced and gullible, I was overwhelmed by Mr. Duffy, who certainly had his semantic and phonetic sciences in working order in planning my building strategy, particularly on how I was to handle creditors and workmen. At times his scheme cast shadows of doubt in my mind as to whether he was a man of confidence or a confidence man.

But I was now in a position where retreat would be disastrous.

The plan of operation finally emerged as follows: Operation was to start on the first of the month, when foundations were laid and enough rough lumber ordered to erect three two-family frame houses and have them under roof ready for the first payment on the construction mortgage by the tenth of the following month, when the bills became due.

An agreement was signed by both parties giving Mr. Duffy exclusive sales right on all properties sold.

As my capital was a mere hundred and fifty dollars, it became necessary to borrow a hundred dollars from a loan shark on our furniture with which to pay carpenter labor. I was about ready for a payment when I received a letter from the mortgage company, stating that my title was faulty.

The lawyer who had represented me in the purchase informed me that Mr. Murphy had married early the morning before closing the deal and signed the deed as a bachelor, therefore his wife's signature was necessary to relinquish her dower right. Unfortunately, Mr. Murphy and his wife had departed on a honeymoon tour around the world, but I was informed, might be contacted by letter to the American consul in Yokohama, Japan, where a letter enclosing the corrected deed was immediately sent.

On informing Mr. Duffy of the unexpected development, he said, "Yes, I knew there was something fishy when the lawyer's secretary didn't show up for work the day we closed the deal. She's an amateur prostitute, a distant relative of mine, and she has promised me five hundred dollars for a contact if it developed into a marriage to Mr. Murphy. I may as well kiss that five hundred goodbye. Anyway, she got the skinflint to sell you the plots on the second mortgage plan. Perhaps my lawyer can place an attachment on those mortgages."

While waiting for the deed to arrive from Japan I took a job as a carpenter. Returning home from work was always a dreadful experience, for always I found one or more cred-



itors waiting to receive me. Men who formerly greeted me with smiles now came with a scowl, demanding their due. That old phrase, "Be sure your sins will find you," certainly applied to me—not with those three unfinished houses across the stret from our abode. Jensine's wailing became hysterical when the loan shark threatened to cart away our furniture if payments on the loan were not met.

After a period of three months the corrected deed arrived from Japan. The mechanics' liens were satisfied and work on the houses resumed.

When the first house was nearly finished Mr. Duffy brought prospects for inspection and sale. Although economy had been used in their construction, Mr. Duffy featured their solidness, clapping the doors and casings with his hands, the while exclaiming, "solid oak; nothing better!"

One of his clients seemed very interested with all he had seen until he came to the basement and asked Mr. Duffy, "What kind of furnace is this?"

"None better," Mr. Duffy replied. "Mr. Petersen uses nothing but the best."

"Well," the prospect said, "if the rest of the house is like the furnace, I don't want it. I happen to work for those people."

On conveyance of title to the first house Mr. Duffy went along to the lawyer's office, for my protection, so he said, but he seemed to place more emphasis on collecting his commission than to furthering my interests.

After stating the reason for our presence, both office girls joined in a jitter as they motioned us to enter the inner sanctum where the lawyer sat at his desk fingering my unsigned deed, which he handed to me as he said, "What in the world made your old man hang that moniker on you; it isn't going to get you anywhere in this country."

On examination I said, "This is the name of Denmark's greatest King, only you've got the 'n' in the wrong place." On the first opportunity I discarded "Knud" and used my second name, "Soren."



The last house unsold was, on Mr. Duffy's advice, wired for electricity, but proved hard to sell, as many people believed wiring attracted lightning.

Through the sale of the houses I was now in possession of fifteen hundred dollars and was contemplating the erection of four more houses when Jensine suddenly decided she was on the verge of death, her last wish on this earth being to see and speak with her mother in Denmark before she passed into eternity. Accordingly, we stored our furniture and bought third-class passage to Denmark on the S.S. Hellig Olav.

We were barely out of New York harbor when Jensine settled down in her bunk, where she remained until we reached Oslo. Most of our supply of diapers was used during our two-day train trip from Chicago: these I washed when on board and hung on a line on the forward deck to dry. Later, when I came to get them, I found someone had stolen the lot. In Jensine's suitcase was a dark green petticoat, which I tore into squares and used as diapers. By the time we reached Copenhagen, Johannes' posterior was as green as the grass in Erin.

On our arrival Father was at the pier to greet us. At home he and Mother gave us the use of their bedroom, which I thought was a gesture of affection on their part until I heard complaints from Mother about the uncomfortable bed she used in the spare bedroom. Relations had become somewhat strained anyway, since Jensine had made disparaging remarks about Mother's antique furniture, likening it to kindling wood. The climax came with her critical remarks about the food served in the home.

We left by steamer for Jutland. To Jensine's home in Tebstrup there was a thirty-five mile ride in an open mail-wagon, drawn by two fat horses, at no time in a great hurry. During the entire ride the oldest boy, much to the annoyance of the driver, was continually wailing, a chronic affliction of his.

It was late in the evening when we arrived at the small straw-thatched clay-and-timber cottage. The interior consisted

of two rooms; a kitchen with a large brick oven; smoked meats, herbs and copper utensils hung from under the ceiling beams, but permeating the atmosphere was an appetizing aroma of roasting meat and fresh baked bread. The living room was furnished with a large commode, an oblong table, and a bench placed close to the outside wall under the window frame. On the opposite side were two alcove beds, filled with fresh straw, covered by two heavy feather quilts and three immense pillows. The beds were rather short, compelling a person of more than medium height to sleep in a sitting position.

Jensine's mother, a stern-faced individual, had the table set and bade us seat ourselves on the bench and wait until her husband arrived, whom she hadn't seen for weeks, he being a herder on a large farm several miles from Trebstrup. The clop, clop of his wooden shoes were heard long before he entered the cottage. He shook our hands and greeted us in a thick peasant dialect, "Welcome here," took a look at the table and said gruffly, "No aquavit?" To ease the situation I went to the cooperative and bought a quart of it.

During the early part of the meal he was silent and reserved, but as the content line lowered on the aquavit bottle you would think he had kissed the Blarney Stone. He had never expected his daughter would marry a Copenhagen fellow, he said, the way those wild boys behaved when they were there on summer vacations; and those returning Americans, who could lie faster than a horse could trot, why, he heard them tell about houses fifty stories high and wages of sixteen Kroner a day! One fellow, though, had let the cat out of the bag, exposing their filthy living conditions when he told how their outhouses were located in their living quarters! With the content line in the bottle nearly zero, he switched his talk to a "lille sort" (black coffee punch) with rum, but the old lady put her foot down and bade him go home. I went across the road to Slader (gossip) Grete's house, where the old lady had arranged for me to sleep.

My brother Erik, who was back in Denmark after spend-

ing several years in Canada, came to spend Christmas with us in Tebstrup. A few days later we left for Esbjerg on the S.S. *Nidaros* for Harwich, England. She was a leaky old tub and, according to the Captain, it was the roughest he ever experienced on this run. Normally a twenty-hour run, she was twelve hours late in reaching Norwich.

On our arrival at Liverpool the Canadian liner on which we had engaged passage had left the day before, with no other sailings in two weeks except a special to be crammed with prospective brides for the Canadian farmers, who were supposed to be waiting for them with open arms and full pocket-books. "All this and passage too" for a five-dollar bill, this low rate due to the desire of the British government to provide brides for the settlers. When the agent offered us passage on this dream boat our better judgment said "no"; our spirit of adventure "yes." If the inclination of the male passengers had been of a lustful nature, Providence took care of that; the voyage was one continual gale from Liverpool to St. John, Canada and we seldom saw a damsel, for they kept themselves anchored to their bunks.

That year Jensine remained in Denmark and was therefore unavailable to sign deeds releasing her dower rights to property. I nevertheless bought several plots on Monroe Street in Austin, Illinois, and erected a bungalow which I intended for our home. To keep my brother and myself occupied we opened a real estate office on Madison Street; I to do the building, he the selling. Evidently salesmanship was not one of his outstanding qualifications, for he never sold a thing during the two years of his association with me in the business.

If Jensine had returned from Denmark with the expectation of tranquility and a new life, she was doomed to disappointment. We were barely settled in the bungalow when it was sold. We moved next door to an unfinished bungalow, an act repeatedly performed until the entire parcel was built up and the plots sold. We moved six times in two years, but—we were making money!

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Webber was a well proportioned, well heeled German. The owner of an old established foundry, he rated high in my estimation, for he paid cash for a sizeable house of mine that had been on the market for some time. He, his wife and eight-year-old son were barely settled in their new home when Mr. Webber dropped dead while mowing the lawn.

For several months Mrs. Webber led a sad, lonely and uneventful life until the postman rang her doorbell and delivered a letter, addressed to her deceased husband, postmarked Fort Oglethorpe. Its contents proved to be a tear-jerking appeal for some cast-off clothing from a former schoolmate of his in Germany. The letter went on to say that he was a prisoner of war, with the rank of Captain, captured when the cruiser Emden (if I recollect rightly) was sunk.

Mrs. Webber had her husband's clothes already assembled in a large bundle waiting for a call from the Salvation Army. Needless to say, it was expressed to Fort Oglethorpe.

Later she received a letter from the Captain, in which he profusely expressed his gratitude. Other letters followed, in one of which he mentioned that if she would sign his bond for four thousand dollars he could be released until the time of his deportation to Germany. Mrs. Webber couldn't get to the bank quickly enough.

On the day of the Captain's arrival at the railroad station I volunteered to act as a one-man reception committee. For a pig in a poke he was a bargain, tall and well proportioned, straight as a ramrod, with classical features adorned with a Kaiser Wilhelm mustache. He rented a room across the street from Mrs. Webber, made himself useful around the house, taught her little boy manners and in the evenings read German poetry to her. It wasn't very long before Mrs. Webber came to our house, happy as a lark, with the wonderful news that she and the Captain were to be married—as if we didn't already know!—asking us to be witnesses to the ceremony.

To part is always a sad event and most unhappy when between lovers, but the day for the Captain's deportation



was fast approaching. "Why not," the Captain suggested, "both of us go back to Germany and live happily ever after" among his aristocratic but poor kinfolk? She swallowed the bait and agreed. Her house was sold at a bargain price, the furniture auctioned off and her bank account closed. Her entire fortune, amounting to seventy five thousand dollars, was exchanged for German marks.

Three months later the Captain became ill and died in Hamburg. We all know what happened to the German mark. Mrs. Webber was stranded without a friend or a cent in a strange land. When her American friends learned of her plight, a collection was started for transportation funds, bringing her and her son back to America. A few days before I left Chicago, on returning a book to the Public Library, I noticed a woman on her knees scrubbing the marble floor: as she turned her head in my direction I recognized Mrs. Webber. Not wanting to embarrass her, I left immediately.

\* \* \* \*

I had an unusual experience while living on the top floor of a two-family house which I had for sale. The first floor was left vacant in case a buyer should want immediate occupancy. It was a Sunday. Jensine was baking pancakes for our breakfast almost as fast as the children and I could eat them. A rather difficult task, as one child wanted them brown all over, the other wanted them only "spotted" brown. Jensine was on the verge of losing her temper when there was a knock on the rear door. On opening it, Jensine was confronted by her Pet Peeve, "a customer," asking permission to inspect the house.

After making a thorough inspection during which he particularly admired the plumbing fixtures, the bargaining began. He proved to be endowed with that trait known as "chiseler." For the price asked, he demanded the living room furniture, which brought a loud wail from Jensine. Next he insisted on the living room rug and hall runner as part of the bargain and this brought hysterical outcries and a flood



of tears from her, with full support by the children. Finally, the bedlam became so great that we had to retreat to the back porch to make ourselves heard. I finally completed the deal by throwing in the hall runner and the back porch swing. Upon my making these concessions he gave me five hundred dollars and left. Two minutes later he opened the door to ask if the gas stove went with the house. This brought a howl from Jensine and the children that could be heard around the neighborhood; it must have scared him, for he closed the door and fled.

Several weeks went by with no word from Mr. Huber. I had neglected to get his address and it wasn't to be found in the directories. Ordinarily I would have forgotten about Mr. Huber but customers with all cash were a rarity. Then I remembered him speaking in a professional way about the plumbing fixtures: could it be that he was working for the Crane Company? It was worth looking into, so I parked my car by the wire fence and went into the gate house—and who was the gateman but Mr. Huber! I said, "Mister, you are the first Dutchman who, to my knowledge, ever gave five hundred dollar bills away. I am curious to know why." He answered that he had approached his wife on the subject of a new house but she had flatly refused to move and he asked me to forget the matter entirely. The bartender in the saloon across the street, where I went to get a "golden fizz," gave me Mr. Huber's address from a ledger containing his weekly charge accounts. I then drove to Lake Avenue to an old frame building, in the front of which was a furnace shop with a button factory, upstairs. The noise from the factories and the elevated railroad running above was enough to make a person insane. Mrs. Huber was sitting on the back stoop peeling potatoes.

"Mrs. Huber," I began, "my congratulations on your husband's purchase of a new house in Austin." The daughter came to the door and said, "It is about time we moved out of this old shack. Lead me to it." After some coaxing we got in my car and drove to the house.

What happened to Mr. Huber when he came home from work that night I never did find out, but they bought the house and moved in. Four months later Mrs. Huber went insane and was committed to the Insane Asylum at Elgin.

On a trip to Elgin I decided to visit Mrs. Huber at the Asylum. The desk clerk informed me she was confined to the violent ward and not allowed to receive visitors. When I asked her what had brought about this condition, she replied that some crooked builder had cheated her out of her life savings!

On Armistice Day, 1919, I sold a two-family house in Cleveland to a Mr. Hart for the price of six thousand dollars. Four years later I met Mr. Hart, who was on his way to close the sale of his home for the price of fifteen-thousand dollars and impressed on me what a fool I had been. He moved into an apartment, but was soon served with an eviction notice on account of his two boisterous boys. After searching many weary weeks for another apartment without results, he was forced to look for a house to purchase, which proved as elusive.

At last, however, a realtor notified him of a new listing which required quick action. When he arrived to inspect the house he found it to be his former home which he bought and for which he paid eighteen thousand dollars!

My brother, who was a dyed-in-the-wool misogynist, not a very endearing trait in Jensine's eyes, one day made a caustic remark about her culinary skills, of which she was very proud. For that he was denied our table; his sole meal each day being brought to the office by me. However, by Thanksgiving her heart had softened a bit and she sent over a portion of roast goose stuffed with prunes and apples, also a dessert of Danish crum apple cake. On returning with the empty dishes, she asked me how he had enjoyed the meal and I thoughtlessly made the remark that he had said a dry piece of pumpernickel would have tasted just as good. Right then she served me with an ultimatum: he must leave immediately or she would!

Erik immediately left for Mexico, but paid us a visit years later on his way to Denmark, where he now resides.

In February, 1912, I became an American citizen. In making out the citizen certificate form, an error was made, adding the letter "s" to Soren. When the error was called to the attention of the clerk, he said there was a charge of fifty dollars to add or subtract one or more letters from a name, so I simply left the "s" on my Christian name.

The year 1912 was also a Presidential year. It is an old American custom to look upon it as a year of uncertainty. This year, however, it was different due to the successful regime of William Howard Taft, who sure of his reelection, spent a minimum effort in directing his campaign from his Morris chair, while the Democrats were wrangling about re-nominating Bryan, "the wind bag," or Champ Clark, finally compromising on Professor Wilson, who had no idea of being elected until Teddy Roosevelt threw his hat in the Bull Moose ring. The rest was duck soup for the Democrats. Wilson's election ended the uncertainty, for confidence was at a low ebb. Only an extreme optimist would even glance at my real estate offerings, described in cards in my office window, let alone buy a house. I closed the office to devote my entire time finishing seven two-family houses.

By the time the Kaiser started the rumpus in Europe the houses were finished; the upper floors were rented at twenty-five dollars a month with heat; the lower floors kept empty for occupancy by a prospective purchaser, should he ever appear.

Directly before we entered the war, prices on commodities rose to an all-time high. Coal sold at thirty dollars a ton. Taxes, interest on mortgages, heat and janitor service soon emptied my bank account, and there was no possibility of the war coming to an end. I deeded all the houses to the mortgagor for three hundred dollars apiece, the amount it would have cost him to foreclose.

Someone had spoken about Cleveland as a progressive city, a rival of Detroit in the automobile industry as such

well known cars as the White, Winton, Gordon, Cleveland and others were being manufactured there. It was 1917, and I gave Jensine half of my twelve hundred dollars and left for Cleveland and there bought a lot in the suburb of Lakewood on the bank of the Rocky River. On this lot I pitched a tent and spent the Summer, during which, single handed from the excavation to wall papering, I built a six-room house and made a profit of one thousand dollars. I sent for Jensine and the two children. A daughter was born while I was in Cleveland, whom Jensine had named Marian in honor of her mother.

The factories in Cleveland were humming, producing material for the war effort. People came there in droves to work and the housing situation became critical. Homes were selling as fast as they could be built and at exorbitant prices. I was making money fast, went high hat and built a home on Lake Avenue, Lakewood's ultra-fashionable residence section.

My entire time, including Sundays and holidays, was spent on business efforts, much to the annoyance of Jensine, who was of a possessive nature, loved housework and cooking for a man who came and went at regular hours and spent the evening in his easy chair with a pipe and a newspaper. My appearance at home always prompted bitter railing at me and stirred up arguments. The situation became so intolerable that I came to hate to put my foot on my own door step.

A middle-aged, stout, domineering dame, who had already disposed of three husbands, now became a habitu  of our house, where she dispensed advice on subduing a husband by attachment on his cash and property. The time came when this dame's legal luminary, who had previously served her in the same kind of a capacity, was engaged to represent Jensine in filing a petition for divorce; this was in 1924. I should have suspected that something unusual was about to happen when, hearing the doorbell ring, the dame scurried from the supper table with only one helping of dessert and vanished through the back door. On answering the bell I was con-



fronted by a gentleman of large proportions, who asked if I was Mr. Petersen. On answering in the affirmative, he thrust a paper into my hand, which I found to be a summons, asking for a divorce, alimony and relief in favor of Jensine.

I went into the kitchen to ask Jensine if she were not making a mistake. She replied that she was not, whereupon I went upstairs, packed my personal belongings and left. Two days later I was served with a restraining order against entering the house. Fortunately enough, my business was incorporated and beyond attachment.

After a lapse of several months I filed a cross petition, followed by a visit from Jensine and the dame now willing to negotiate on terms. They came to find out that I was made of tougher material than either of her previous husbands when I ordered her to get out.

We were both on time with our respective attorneys when our case was called in court.

For the occasion Jensine had bought a black coat lined with pink satin. When her attorney escorted her to the witness stand, she took off her coat, draped it over the chair, exposing the pink satin lining, and sat majestically down. Here "at last" was someone with authority to listen with undivided attention to her tale of woe and this was her hour of revenge on one who had denied her that comfort, and more. Her attorney gently drew from her the story of her unhappy married life: always denied a permanent home, her husband had built houses, moved into them and later sold them, until she had moved eighteen times in sixteen years. From the look the judge gave me, I concluded that he still resided in his ancestral home.

The dame followed Jensine on the stand, testified she had found her in a depressed mental condition—(which was no trick at all, that being her normal state of mind)—but through a series of seances it had been revealed to her that relief could be obtained only by taking action in a court of law, which had the power to put a husband in his place, or



saddle him with stiff financial obligations of alimony and support.

My turn on the witness stand was of short duration, for there were no denials of accusations, only a look of surprise on Jensine's face when I stated that moving so many times had been for me a lot of fun. The judge reserved decision until the matter of alimony and custody of the children had been agreed upon.

On my way out of the courtroom I saw Jensine and her friends in the corridor, discussing the poor impression the dame had made on the judge. To show my appreciation of her contribution to the act, I made the mistake of lifting my hat and bowing deeply in the direction of the dame, who immediately rushed into the judge's chamber and informed him of my frivolous action. The old Danish proverb, "Politeness costs no money," wasn't true in this case. An expensive bow, indeed, for it cost me an extra thousand dollars in alimony!

A month or so later I was riding in a street car when Jensine entered. Evidently she didn't see me as she seated herself opposite. The tipping of my hat in recognition was acknowledged with a look of scorn, whereupon she got up and left the car. An elderly lady sitting next to me said, "Shame on you! Trying to flirt with a strange lady!"

That was the last time I saw Jensine. Shortly thereafter she moved to Chicago with the two younger children, the eldest remaining with me. Two years later I received notice of her death. My son was then in the Army and the daughter living with a distant relative of her mother.

## PART VII

In June, 1925, I was married to my second wife, Krestense, in Cleveland, Ohio. She was a typical Danish peasant girl, pretty as a picture with provocative blue eyes and hair the color of ripe wheat.

Though times were considered prosperous under Coolidge's administration, prosperity in Cleveland had tapered off, due to mass production of automobiles by million dollar corporations in Detroit, practically eliminating Cleveland's manufacturers as competitors in that field. Too, labor unions were on the rampage; their crazy exorbitant demands were driving industry out of town. Building construction was at a standstill due to strikes by divers trades. The carpenters' union had passed rules whereby a builder was prohibited from performing any manual labor on his own buildings. Under those conditions we thought it better to sell out and leave Cleveland.

In Denmark the members of my family were all doing very well financially, so, when one of them who operated a paper box factory, offered me the management of a branch to be established in London, I accepted the offer. We sold our house and furniture, and, having arranged with friends to board my oldest son until his graduation from high school, in December, 1925, we left for Denmark on the *S.S. Republic*.

Our arrival in Copenhagen did not spark any exuberant celebration on the part of my relatives. Indeed, there was no one to welcome us, so we took quarters in the Palace Hotel. On visiting my home I learned that Father had swallowed the incredible lies in Jensine's letters, and he informed me that he had changed his will, cutting my inheritance in half.

However, offsetting somewhat my natural reaction to this generally unsatisfactory situation was the meeting with a

new group of in-laws and being initiated into a new tribe. We left for Krestense's home in Vendsysel, a dreary, barren spot. The few hardy trees that grew there leaned toward the south on a forty-five degree angle, bent by the winds that came roaring in from the turbulent North Sea. The house was a long, narrow straw-thatched building, formerly used as a poor house, consisting of twelve small rooms, well occupied, as my father-in-law was raising a family of sixteen children. One of the rooms contained a loom on which Krestense's mother, after cutting, carding and spinning the wool, wove it into cloth and sewed it into family garments of a most peculiar style. Besides this and other chores, there were sixteen cows to milk. The house was heated by three peat-burning, tall cast-iron stoves.

In the morning when the sun happened to shine through the small window in our bedroom, beads of condensation on the clay walls shone like a million diamonds. The old folks were very religious; there were prayers before and after each meal. In the evening, to amuse the children, I started to read aloud out of the *Three Musketeers*. It all went very well until I came to the point where d'Artagan hopped into the bed with the queen, whereupon the old lady called a halt, took the book out of my hand and dropped it on the peat fire in the stove, much to the annoyance of the children.

Whether it is a fault or a virtue, my curiosity has always been keen and it prompted me to decide to visit Krestense's neighbor, the local Herreman, "Land Baron," one of a class most every rural community in Denmark is burdened with. So, one bright morning, much against the advice of the old lady not to seek admittance to the presence of such an important personality, I reached for my cane—no gentleman in Denmark being properly attired without one—and strolled toward the half-mansion, half farmhouse, located a distance from the road, through a tree-lined avenue of approach.

Pulling the large porcelain knob on the front door jam started a cowbell ringing in the entrance hall. A maid with cheeks as large and red as a pair of Coney Island balloons,

answered the racket. After identifying myself to her, she escorted me to the parlor and bade me sit down; the Herreman, she said would see me as soon as he had finished lunch. From where I sat he was in plain view and on the last round of the lunch, cognac and coffee. When he finished he tore a napkin as big as a towel from under his chin to wipe his mouth, rose to his feet, entered the parlor with the usual peasant greeting, and seated himself on the edge of a chair, the while eyeing me with suspicion. He was facing his pet peeve, a returning American—another bad example for his hired help, who never stayed longer than such time as they had accumulated enough kroner to purchase passage to America.

The Herreman was a man about fifty years old, a ruddy-faced, arrogant individual, who had escaped marriage until lately, but had managed through the years to father six illegitimate children, by six different milkmaids employed by him, but at whom no one could point a finger as he had admitted their paternity and was meeting legal contributions to each, such contributions being commonly known in Denmark as "ass tax."

As we had no interests in common he excused himself as a very busy man. To put me in my place he exited me through the rear door, at the moment his foreman was entering with his hat in hand and in stocking feet. Unfortunately, I tripped over the latter's wooden shoes parked on the entrance stone, and fell headlong on the turf. My cry of pain was answered by a slam of the door.

When the job in London failed to materialize, Krestense and I decided on a try to make our future in Copenhagen. It is an old country custom to look upon Americans, whose pockets are lined with gold, as legitimate prey. No exception to the rule, I was approached at a party in my brother's home by a Folketingsman—something on the order of a U.S. congressman—on the subject of contributing toward a statue in memory and vindication of one of Denmark's kings. The latter was an outstanding, notorious character, who had taken



great pleasure in chopping the heads off the nobles and was nicknamed "Bloody Kristian." Collections, however, were slow: after all, what noble would and what proletarian could, contribute? The Folketingman's approach was veiled in intimations of a possible chance to pick up the minor title of "Dannebrogsmán," thereby putting my foot on the first rung of the ladder of nobility. Never a lover of *dignidad*, my suggestion to him was to approach someone else, better-heeled, who would appreciate the jaw-breaking title.

Anyway, our stay had not turned out so well. Having become used to the large open spaces, the small country with its dense population soon palled us. The Danes, as the Germans soon discovered during their occupation, are adept in the art of ridicule and fox humor and possessed of an insatiable curiosity. Their economy depends almost entirely on agricultural products, much of which is consumed in practicing their favorite indoor sport, that of eating. The middle class being hospitable to an exceptional degree, we were constantly invited to luncheons and dinners. In no time my weight increased thirty pounds. With all the delicious, tempting food about, dieting was out of the question. We tried to solve the problem by sewing wedges in our clothes. It finally became a case of either buying new wardrobes, or leaving the country. Anyway, Krestense was now pregnant and wanted the child to be born in the United States, so it was decided that she should remain in Denmark with her family and come over as soon as I had got established somewhere in America.

\* \* \* \*

I left on the S.S. *Republic* and arrived in New York in March, 1926. I got out my Packard car, which was stored in a garage in New Jersey while we were in Europe, with the intention of driving to Cleveland where I would pick up my son, who had recently graduated from High School, and proceed from there to Amarillo, Texas, where I planned to start building operations.

However, before starting out West I spent a few days in New York City, looking over the building situation, which looked very favorable. On my leisurely drive toward Cleveland my thoughts kept wandering back to New York City and what I had seen in regard to possibilities there, which created a doubt in my mind as to whether it was not as good or perhaps better than Amarillo. Stopping at a motel in Erie, Pennsylvania, that night I decided to settle the matter by tossing a penny in the air; it landed head up—my choice for New York.

Back in New York City with my son, we engaged a room in the Park Central Hotel. From there we drove around looking for a likeable spot on which to start operations. The doorman at the hotel mentioned that Newark, New Jersey, was a booming city. Although the following morning was quite foggy, we nevertheless started out for Newark. After driving an hour or so the clouds parted and gave us a glimpse of the sun, now shining directly on the windshield.

"We are going East instead of West," said I. "Let's get out and get located."

A cop informed us we were in Flushing, Long Island. We spent the rest of the forenoon there looking over possibilities. At noon we went into a restaurant for a bite to eat. Next to our table sat two men who were having a rather loud argument: whether one of them, presumably a builder, should furnish window shades in his newly purchased home. We left our partly-finished lunch to follow the men to a development nearby, where several jerry-built houses, all similar in architectural design, were under construction. Each had a "Sold" sign nailed to a stake driven in the front yard.

Approached by the swarthy builder on paying a deposit on the erection of a house similar to the others at a price of twelve thousand dollars, I knew we had struck a bonanza. That same afternoon we rented rooms at the Y.M.C.A., then went to a real estate office and paid a deposit on the purchase of four forty-foot plots at three thousand dollars apiece, cash

on the line on delivery of deed. But, as you shall see later on, there was, as always, a fly in the ointment.

Presenting myself at the Borough Hall for a building permit with plans and specifications for a six-room stucco house, the clerk behind the wicket handed me a pamphlet to fill out, describing the general construction, traps and vents in the plumbing, size and carrying capacity of the beams, and so forth—all questions only an architectural mathematician would be able to answer. I filled it in to the best of my ability and handed it, with the prescribed fee, to the clerk behind the wicket.

Several days later I received a letter from the Building Department, stating that questions in my application had been incorrectly answered. Anxious to start operations, I rushed to the permit office and made out another application. My attempt to solicit information from the clerk was countered with a shrug. Several days later I received another letter similar to the first. On my third attempt to secure the building permit I decided to watch the procedure of other applicants for permits before I started to fill out my own application. An unkempt person came to the wicket and asked for an application blank in a brogue you could cut with a knife. I watched him laboriously write his name, address and location of the intended structure—then place a ten-dollar bill between the last two pages of the pamphlet and shove it and a set of plans, together with the permit fee, and then depart. Following the same procedure I had my permit in two days!

A team of horses had hardly crossed the sidewalk to begin excavation for the cellar before a burly cop appeared, demanding to see our sidewalk permit. On confessing my ignorance, he explained that a permit was necessary if a team of horses crossed a public sidewalk to work on building operations. It could be obtained at Borough Hall for a fee of two dollars and a cash deposit of fifty dollars as a bond to cover repairing any damage done to the walk during construction. "And," he added, "believe you me, those birds in the Hall

are tough; you hardly ever get a cent back from the bond, but for a five dollar bill, donated to the Police Pension Fund, I will forget the matter."

It wasn't forgotten: two days later another cop came with the same story as his partner in crime. On being told that one cop had already collected, he said the other had no right to collect, as that was his last day on that beat. Threatening to call the matter to the attention of the station Captain, he produced his summons book, which I bade him put back in his pocket as I placed a five-dollar bill in his hand.

We needed water for our operations but the watermain was across the street, which required a ditch to be dug across the street, wide enough to allow for digging. A call to the water department for a tab on the main, brought a truck occupied by two men, one of whom slid out to take a look, remained a few minutes, then drove off. Calling the department again, I got the information that there was not enough elbow room to work the tools. When corrected, the same outfit returned to go through the same performance. Finally, to protect traffic the ditch was covered with planks each night. A cop who came to complain about the poor planking said, "I undersand you are a new man here and not on to the ropes yet. Take a tip from me and play with the boys or they will soon have you behind the eight ball. You'll be surprised what four bucks, placed on the driver's seat in the department truck can do for you." I took the emissary's hint, and had water that same afternoon!

The house was eventually ready for the plasterers. The plumbing and electrical contractors had paid their graft to their respective inspectors. Guided by my previous experience I was prepared to contribute to the inspector who came to approve construction before the walls were plastered. He spent but a few minutes, said "Good bye" and left. I congratulated the city on having at least one honest man in its employ, but soon changed my mind when the plasterer called to my attention that the inspector had neglected to paste an "OK" sticker on the front door jamb. The following after-



noon the postman delivered a registered letter from the Building Department, which proved to be an order to stop work immediately as I was violating the code and listed several items in violation thereof.

My realtor's advice was not to bother about rectifying the mentioned violations but call for another inspection. "When the inspector arrives," he said, "place five ten dollar bills in his hand before he gets out of his car, as he is gone in the legs and hates to walk." Upon following this advice, we saw no more of him until the next house was ready for his inspection.

When finished the house was sold for fourteen thousand dollars. After the drones and grafters were paid two thousand dollars in bonuses, title fees, twenty-five percent discount on a four thousand dollar second mortgage, etcetera, there remained a profit of two thousand dollars, which called for more action. In 1926, after I rented an apartment in Flushing Krestense came over from Denmark and soon after gave birth to a son, to whom we gave the old Viking name of "Gunnar." Then came a letter from Chicago, stating that my daughter was in bed with a bad case of tuberculosis. I immediately brought her to my home in New York, where, after lingering a month or so, she died on her eighteenth birthday and was buried in Flushing.

As I gradually became well off financially, a desire for the better things of life developed, together with an urge to build larger and better homes in a better locality. After thoughtful consideration we selected Great Neck, part of Long Island's North Shore Gold Coast, then as fine a suburban area as any in the country.

Among other better things in life we started to collect early American glass, chinaware and Currier and Ives prints, of which latter I managed to collect several hundreds, mostly of a historical period. Besides the thrill of collecting them, they gave us many a lesson in history.

Our first purchases were a few cups and plates of old English Ironstone, in the strawberry pattern, with the hope

of completing the set. After talking to a lady in an antique shop in Vermont, who was also collecting the same pattern and had searched in vain for fifteen years for the sugar and creamer, we gave up our efforts in that collection.

One of the many thrills I experienced was that of collecting Currier and Ives portraits of our first sixteen Presidents. They were not easy to obtain, particularly that of Millard Fillmore, who was our thirteenth President. Many people of his period were superstitious and believed that having his portrait on a wall was a bad omen; consequently, if one could be found it brought a price of a hundred dollars or more. It was seven years after acquiring the portraits of the fifteen Presidents that I ran across that of Millard Fillmore, displayed on the parlor wall in an old farmhouse in the red clay country below York, Pennsylvania.

Spotting the kill I maneuvered toward some worthless trinkets, which I bought for a trifle. On my way out I glanced toward Fillmore and nonchalantly asked the old farm woman for the price. "What'll you give?" she asked. "I said, "One dollar." She threw her arms above her head, clasped her hands together and cried, "Oh, *no!* This is a rare picture. I wouldn't take a cent less than two dollars!"

This method of offering a low price doesn't always work, for some owners are as alert as foxes. Which brings me to a "miss" I often regret.

On a trip to Maine I stopped in a small Connecticut town and went into a tavern for refreshments. Chatting with the bartender, when I asked him if he knew of any one around who owned antiques, he referred me to an old house across the road and I went there. At my knock a cheerful old couple came to the door and invited me into the parlor where I spotted a grimy old painting of a ship which resembled the frigate, "*Constitution*." On my closer examination, it appeared to be a Butterworth, one of America's eminent marine painters. A bit of saliva and a few gentle rubs disclosed the first three letters of his signature.

It was through the usual "What'll you take?" and "What'll

you give?" procedure that I aroused their suspicion and got a refusal when I offered fifty dollars instead of a two dollar bill.

Several days later on, on my way home I stopped at the same tavern where the owner was in charge of the bar. Inquiring if he knew of any one around who owned antiques, he said: "Speaking of antiques, there was an S.O.B. of a city slicker here last week who offered the old couple across the road fifty dollars for an old painting. They got suspicious by such a large offer and took it to the city where they sold it for two thousand dollars!"

In many years' pursuit of glass and prints, the item I have enjoyed more than any other is an N. Currier lithograph of George Washington, after Gilbert Stuart's painting; also, incidentally, the circumstances under which I obtained it.

I had stopped near Bangor, Maine, in front of a large clapboard house. On the porch sat an old man in a rocking chair, with a horse blanket tucked around his legs. On my inquiring if he had any antiques for sale, he mentioned that he was suffering from cancer and had just arrived from the hospital to spend his remaining few days at home. That morning, he said, he had made a trade with the undertaker, who then had carted away most of his antique furniture as payment for his funeral expenses, but, he added, I was welcome to look around.

The number of unfaded squares on the wallpaper and dustfree spaces on the floor from recently removed items proved the undertaker had driven a hard bargain. In a corner of the well-cleared attic I saw a framed picture, face down, and on lifting it I recognized the portrait of George Washington. I brought it downstairs to be priced by the old man.

"Well, well," he said, 'haven't seen him in a long while. He used to hang on our parlor wall but when ma died, pa took him down and hung my stepmother's picture in his stead. As things turned out, it would have been a heap better to have left George where he was. But you can take him away for fifty dollars."

Passing the house a week or so later on my way home, I noticed the undertaker carting away the old Yankee's remains and wondered if I had been the last to drive a bargain with him.

On the morning of October 29, 1929, the country was beaming with optimism and prosperity. Before evening, however, a disastrous blow had been struck which threw the country into the first phase of the greatest depression in its history. The fantastic, fictitious values of securities had collapsed. Sixteen million shares were recorded sold on the New York Stock Exchange: two days later it closed its doors.

People who had become accustomed to living in luxury became paupers; many committed suicide. Some one had sold the country short. "Who shall be the goat?" President Hoover, who had been in office only seven months, was unanimously elected to fill that post. Hoover, an expert on famine, whom statesmen said "acted while others muddled" was hindered in restoring normalcy by a hostile Congress and spent the remaining years of his term in office in agony.

The deplorable situation went from bad to worse. Real estate values dropped fifty percent, with no takers, at that, for the reason that people had no money. Foreclosers were working overtime, wiping out first and second mortgages. My own second mortgages and, as well, a substantial amount of Packard stock I bought on margin, were wiped out.

In one respect I was lucky: I still had some cash and the houses I had ready for sale were free of mortgages but only for the reason that although the papers for them were prepared for signatures, the bank refused to execute them.

Came 1932, an election year. Hoover's opponent, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was certain of election. Hoover's promise of two chickens in every pot had been topped by Roosevelt's promise of two cars in every garage. When Roosevelt was inaugurated as President in March, 1933, in a period of serious banking crisis, he was granted unprecedented power to lift us out of the depression. The time for pussyfooting had passed. "Happy days are here again" certainly proved true



in years that followed for him and his gang—but not for me.

The next three years were spent in anxiety and hard work. Whenever one of my houses was sold without a profit or a loss, I swore never to build another. But nights after the day's hard work, when a person's reasoning power is at its lowest, there was Franklin on the national radio networks with his "Friends and Neighbors" talk, delivered in that Harvard drawl of his, verbally picturing another fairyland just around the corner. When I expressed my doubt, Krestense would say, "You cynical man! Aren't *all* Presidents like George Washington—they never tell lies?"

1936 was another election year. Regardless of what Roosevelt said about prosperity, I sought reassurance from the highest authority, the Bible. Somewhere among its leaves is something about "seven meager and seven fruitful years." Why not, I thought, give that a chance too? I formed a building corporation, kept fifty-one percent of the stock, and divided the balance between an Irish lawyer and a Jewish plumber. We bought several acres of land on a hilltop in the village of Great Neck. It was heavily studded with tall oak trees and overlooked a small inlet of Long Island Sound. It was a mystery why this desirable tract had been left so long without effort being made to develop it—unless because of the legend that the Matinecock Indians brought their victims there for execution. Which we should have taken as an omen for us to let it alone.

You have probably heard the yarn about the business partnership between a Swede, a Jew and an Irishman, where the Swede did the work, the Irishman took the glory and the Jew the money. But our partnership didn't turn out that way.

According to government statistics there was a shortage of three million homes in the United States. This was a signal to go ahead. How could we go wrong!

When several houses had been erected, we started to dig the cesspools, but after digging down thirty feet through blue

clay without striking drainable soil, we gave up. Our lawyer went to the village fathers, who, after many debates floated a bond issue of forty-thousand dollars, assessments to be spread over the area, for the construction of a trunk sewer, that and the laterals leading into the houses to be constructed by the slowest moving body on earth, the W.P.A. It took almost a year before the sewers were completed; in the meantime, the cellars were full of water, the interior woodwork and doors swollen out of all proportions. It took several months to get things back in shape.

We were about to close title on the first completed house when the prospective purchaser's lawyer phoned to inform us that, according to his title search, we had neither ingress nor egress to our property, so he had advised his client not to close title before the situation was corrected.

It developed that in 1870, when the property was last sold, it had been surveyed by "chain" method, which is not very accurate, so, to avoid selling land to which he had no title the grantor left a strip of land ten feet wide around the entire parcel.

The Title Company, which had issued our Guaranty Policy to the parcel, was then under the control of the Mortgage Commissioners, who were in the process of salvaging part of the fictitious value on their guaranteed Mortgage Certificates. On taking up this matter with them we were told that we must look to the grantor for redress, but he had departed for parts unknown after selling the blanket mortgage on our land. For immediate action, then, our best bet was to locate the person who had acquired title to the strip by paying the delinquent taxes thereon. As a rule the birds who practice this kind of business are tough to deal with, and this fellow "had" us.

He must have been expecting us, for he had an itemized account of expenditures on the land in question in the top drawer of his desk. The interview with him was short and to the point. The price he mentioned was enough to make you wince, but there was no alternative: we paid!

While so many small businessmen were being wiped out by the large corporations, I had the comforting thought small home construction of the better class was beyond the grasp of mass production by large corporations, which were not able to give their personal supervision an individual builder could give.

Suddenly a couple of large corporations appeared in the immediate vicinity, starting construction of a hundred or more houses at a time. Building materials were bought by the train load. Political strings were pulled to alter building codes to permit lighter construction under which wallboards were substituted for plaster, composition substitutes for wood sheeting, paper shingles for slate roofs and "flash" construction for sturdy construction. Fortunes were spent in advertising their products in the Metropolitan newspapers.

Prospects flocked to buy their houses; to us came the chiselers, distress buyers and the "shammers." We had no more of a chance than an independent grocer next door to a chain food store.

Most land tracts bought for development purposes are bought on the basis of a small down payment, the balance of the purchase price being in the form of a blanket mortgage with release clauses, releasing the land as needed. Interest on these tracts and other mortgages on the homes erected, plus taxes, which latter had increased considerably since subdividing, made time an important element in land development. Under normal conditions a successful development is completed in two years, yet in more than a year we had sold only one house.

When some of our creditors threatened us with "involuntary bankruptcy," the lawyer, who dabbled in politics, became frantic. Rather than become involved in a bankruptcy proceeding, he offered me his shares in our corporation as a present. The plumber made a few remarks about giving the tracts back to the Indians as he also made me a present of his shares.

There remained four thousand dollars in my private bank

account and this I was willing to use to save my name from the stigma of bankruptcy. The lumber dealer, with whom I was on very friendly terms and who, like myself, had spent time in the Arctic, agreed to forget his claim for the present and to furnish material for future operations; with long time credit, provided future houses were constructed in quality compared to that of the large corporations.

A meeting was called of the creditors, where the position of our corporation was thoroughly explained to them. It started in orderly fashion until I came to the point of either turning lock, stock and barrel over to them or settling on the basis of thirty-five cents on the dollar, whereupon bedlam broke loose. After a long conference with their lawyer and a thorough scrutinizing of the company's books, the thirty-five-cents-on-the-dollar offer was accepted.

Through a few advertisements in the metropolitan newspapers, the remaining houses were sold below cost, giving me some working capital which I used in constructing smaller houses of inferior construction, which sold rapidly. Now, about half of the acreage was built upon, I had four additional houses under construction and it looked as if I was out of the red.

On September 21, 1938, the last day of summer, while the rain was pouring down in buckets, I was standing in the open doorway of the small sales office at the extreme end of the development, watching the clouds in the sky moving in a most peculiar, incessant motion. Suddenly the wind increased to a gale that reached hurricane force as the sky turned to gold dust and black velvet, creating an existing grandeur, as the wind came spinning at nearly eighty miles an hour and blew the last remaining leaves off the oaks. Then, with a booming as of great guns, the giant oaks, bent toward each other by the fury of the wind, toppled to the ground while the branches tore the slate off the roofs, and the trunks shifted the houses on their foundations and their roots tore the road pavement to pieces. The Woodlands were as bare as a prairie. Knowing I could do nothing to save the



Woodlands, I took a few personal belongings from the office and went home.

A couple days later there came a letter from the Danish Consul in New York City to report and receive a check in the amount of four thousand dollars, that being my inheritance from my parents' estate. That afternoon I went to view the damage the hurricane had done to the Woodlands, which I estimated to be between three and four thousand dollars.

Now that I had fresh capital, it was time for me to decide what course of action to take: either leave the Woodlands in its mess and pocket my inheritance, or put it back in shape and continue as before.

However, there was an unexpected circumstance to consider. Krestense was sick. On her last visit to Denmark she had substituted as District Nurse for her ailing sister. Unaccustomed to administering to the ill, she had contracted a disease and was failing fast. On our doctor's recommendation I brought her and our son Gunnar to live in a small village high up in the Catskills.

After wrestling with my problems for a day or two I decided to continue with the Woodlands. To cut expenses to the bone our furniture was stored, a couch was moved to the small office on the development, and there I made my home during the winter months.

To raise additional cash, most of my Currier and Ives prints were sold at auction at the Plaza Art Galleries.

So far as work was concerned, Stakhanovite, the Russian worker, who exceeded all others in production, had nothing on me except that his efforts may have been remunerative. Every day found me financially deeper in the hole.

When time arrived to pay taxes and interest on the land mortgage the till was empty and the owners of the mortgages were threatening foreclosure. They had been very tolerant with me in our dealings, so when they found a builder who was willing to purchase the balance of the vacant land, to save them the expense of foreclosure I willingly gave them a deed thereto.

I was out of business at the age when most men are thinking of retiring; I was a bankrupt at the commencement of the greatest building era the world had ever known.

After a few small personal debts were paid, my capital consisted of fifteen dollars and an old jalopy. But, at that, I was more than holding my own; it was thirteen dollars more than I had when I landed in America. Besides, my motive in coming to America was not mercenary; it was excitement and adventure. And who could say I had been cheated!

It took a fanatic to pull the country out of its economic ether: it was Hitler's mad rush to conquer the world that brought work to so many. I hired out as a carpenter on barrack construction on an air plane field in Sebring, Florida. Most all the men in the coach traveling to Sebring as carpenters were amateurs, yet surprised me with the dexterity with which some of them performed their work.

Now that winter had set in, it was wonderful to work in the open under the warm Florida sun. Next to the barrack I was working on was a large orange grove, where the boys went to help themselves to the fruit. Compared to New York, living was cheap and there was a lot of overtime, which added to the regular wages. My part of the job was very easy, but made me feel very old. The day the gang arrived and reported for work, the superintendent, looking us over, pointed at me and said: "All right, Pop! We got a light job for you—putting locks in the doors." The superintendent was an old ward-heeler from St. Louis and entirely ignorant of even the rudiments of construction. After discovering me to be a former builder, most of my time was spent in his office. It was now 1941, and I was promoted to a foreman's job when I received a telegram from New York that Krestense had passed away. I left immediately for New York to bury her in Flushing Cemetery, next to my daughter Marian.

My next move was to Massapequa, a village on the south shore of Long Island, where I contracted to do carpenter labor on various buildings, but this did not prove very profitable.

## PART VIII

In 1942 I married my third wife, Molly McCarthy, who was born in County Cork, Ireland. During her adolescent years she had worked several years as a governess in a family of the better class in England and had thereby acquired a measure of culture and an appreciation of the better things in life, together with a broad A. A very energetic and sociable personality, far from crude, who knew a Wedgwood from a piece of Staffordshire—quite superior, in fact, to either of my former wives in those qualities that make for congeniality and comradeship in married life. It has been a mystery to me, why a gem of her type had so long escaped notice in the matrimonial market.

Naturally, Molly wanted a wedding following the prescribed rules of her Church. This required a visit by me to the priest of her home parish in Hartford, Connecticut, a visit which proved very interesting. Beginning with a questionnaire, it wound up in conversation, during which I discovered that Father Kelly was also a collector of Currier and Ives lithographs. We were now treading on mutually happy ground. To make my intended wife happy, Father Kelly promised he would visit his Bishop and, if possible, obtain a dispensation for us to be married in the church proper instead of in the Rectory. Later in the afternoon, to show my appreciation, I again visited Father Kelly and presented him with a Currier and Ives "Winter Scene." Kind-hearted and charitable soul that Father Kelly is, he decided to reciprocate by offering me the choice of one of his numerous works of art then hanging on a wall in the upstairs Rectory. I knew nothing about, nor was I interested in paintings, but out of courtesy I accepted his generous offer and selected the most

hideous nude, merely for the reason that it seemed out of place in Father Kelly's life.

After our marriage we rented a house in Massapequa and brought my thirteen-year-old son to live with us. Molly, who is very economical, had saved five thousand dollars from her earnings and with this we decided to build a house. We bought a plot bordering on a golf course. By fall the house was finished and we moved in.

This damn nude now became a bone of contention between Molly and me. She demanded a place of honor for the painting on our living room wall, among my Currier and Ives prints, while my suggestion of an appropriate place for a nude was the bathroom. As you may guess, she won the argument, much to my disgust.

One evening a friend, who is an auctioneer and claims to be a connoisseur, paid us a visit. After imbibing several Scotches on the Rocks, his rambling conversation stopped as he spotted the nude on the wall. On closer examination he barely managed to stutter, "You have an Elshimus here!"

"Elshimus or not," I said, "if I had my way you'd be welcome to take her along."

He seemed overwhelmed as he said, "I have not and never expect to get enough money to purchase a masterpiece of that rank."

After he left, Molly nodded her head and said, "See?"

I said, "Nuts! He's drunk."

Several months later Mr. Terry, a professor at New York University, came to visit. He is in his own right an artist, though his paintings lean toward still life. When questioned about the nude he assured us that we "had something."

At this moment Molly came into the living room with a newspaper in her hand and started to read aloud about a fellow who had found and bought a George Inness landscape hanging on the wall in a barbershop, for which he was offered a small fortune.

"I am sure," said she, "that Elshimus is every inch as good



an artist as George Inness and I am convinced we own a treasure."

I am skeptical by nature and my skepticism has not decreased during years as a collector of antiques, but here was a chance to kill two flies with one smack: get the nude off the wall and peddle her for a fortune!

The following morning Molly carefully wrapped our treasure in heavy brown paper. I took the train to the City to visit the best art galleries and there offer it for sale. I shall not mention names but, self-assured, I walked into what I believed to be the "ultra" of the upper stratum of the dispensers of art. I was directed by a pompously dressed colored attendant to a plush armchair, to await my turn for an audition with the manager, who was busy in his office selling a Park Avenue dowager a work of art. When my turn came to enter the inner sanctum, I proudly announced to the manager that I was the owner of a genuine "Elshimus" and that I was offering it for sale. As I started to untie the knot of the string that held my treasure, the manager, with the manner of a potentate, waved his hand in my direction and in a bored voice said, "Never mind untying that string; we are not interested in that kind of stuff. *This is an Art Gallery.*"

I was overwhelmed. Crestfallen, I left. Oh, well! "Faint heart ne'er got rid of a fair lady." So I visited several other places, being received with the same indifference. At the last gallery the manager sent me off with a mocking laugh.

I was standing on the corner of Fifty-seventh Street and Madison Avenue with the nude in my arms, trying to decide whether I should push her down into the metal waste paper container or lean her up against the corner building, flee and abandon her to her fate, when an old friend came up. On his inquiring what had brought me to town I told him my troubles. Evidently interested in nudes he asked me for a peek and when he saw the signature of Eshimus his eyes bulged as he cried, "Are you crazy? You've taken her to the wrong places; she's worth her weight in gold! Across the

street, upstairs, there's a man who knows how to handle her. A specialist."

I thanked him for the information, checked the nude in a drugstore and proceeded toward the gallery across the street.

This time I assumed the role of a buyer. I entered and was ushered into the presence of the manager, who was seated behind an enormous Hollywood desk twisting a small waxed mustache, the very picture of dignity itself. I informed him of the object of my visit; to buy an Elshimus nude, mentioning the size of mine for a price comparison. At this his face assumed a very sad expression; he shook his head in deep regret while informing me of the impossibility of procuring such a rare item. He had several Elshimus nudes but was very reluctant to dispose of them, for, as I should well know, "Elshimus" was dead and would never paint another nude (I mentally thanked Heaven for that!) but if I would wait he would search his vaults to see what he could find.

After a while he returned and stood a nude on a plush pedestal, took me by the arm and together we stepped backward a few paces for a better perspective. A smile of admiration played about his lips as he spoke softly of the blending colors which only a great artist could produce. Then his expression changed to scorn as he expressed bitter reproach of "Americans who let the father of American modern art die in poverty."

After a moment of appropriate solemnity I quietly asked the price. Yes, he knew how my artistic soul longed to possess an Elshimus nude; he could well imagine how bare a home would be without one and he would charitably aid in my initiation into the Brotherhood of Elshimus Collectors. Which must be really something, for his illustrated catalogue sported names reading like the Social Register. Yes, he would part with one of his nudes for the mere bagatelle of three thousand dollars—just to get me started. I promised to think it over and departed. I took my nude home and told Molly that our nude had no definite value, whereupon we compromised and hung her in our rear bedroom.

But you know how persistent some women can be. Two weeks later Molly telephoned the Elshimus man and asked him if he would be interested in buying an "Elshimus nude." He said, "No; we have a lot of that stuff here. It's a drug on the market!" So I moved the nude up to the attic, where she is now gathering dust.

Anyway, it was a beautiful dream—while it lasted—to be the owners of a potential priceless work of art. But you can't live on dreams; the building industry was at a standstill, so both of us took a job on the night shift in an airplane factory.

\* \* \* \*

We were happy when the war was over and our services at the airplane factory dispensed with. Our efforts had netted us close to four thousand dollars, which were used for the purchase of a lot across the road from where we lived. I built a five-room Cape Cod cottage, an exact duplicate of one of the houses I had earlier built in Chicago and which I had sold for eighteen hundred dollars. If someone at that time had told me I would live long enough to sell its duplicate for eleven thousand dollars I would certainly have told him he was talking through his hat!

It was 1947, and I had reached sixty-five, an age when most men think about retiring, but my resources were not adequate to allow me to indulge in that luxury. Anyway, as the sages say, "It is better to wear out than rust out." It was rather late in life to launch a building program; risky, too, having been caught before with houses for sale on a declining market, and, in addition, building material and labor had gone sky high. We decided, therefore, to solve our problem by selling our house, search the countryside for an old house in need of repair, such as we could do ourselves, sell same when restored, and then repeat the performance until we possessed enough capital to consider retirement. The time between the making of the sales contract and delivery of deed to our home was spent in locating and purchasing an old house in New City, Rockland County. It was in a sad state

of decay, but the price was right, so, on the 17th of March, while a snowstorm was raging, we moved into the old house. It had neither plumbing nor electricity, but we had brought a couple of kerosene lamps, and in the kitchen was a darling of an old cookstove. Arduous as moving always is, at night we fell exhausted into our bed and soon fell asleep. Toward midnight I was awakened by Molly, who had heard peculiar noises from the attic. When I opened the scuttle and played a flashlight across the floor, several fat rats scurried to disappear under the floorboards. It must have been the heat from the stove that brought out into the open the most repulsive insects I have ever seen. We spent the rest of the night swatting insects. Next morning we moved to a hotel in the city while the exterminator went to work in the house. After cleaning out the accumulated dirt of a century, the house was modernized and was sold at a fair profit. With the proceeds from this sale, plus the profit from speculating in the stock market, together with a small Social Security check, we were now able to retire, provided we handled our funds with care.

Perhaps we were stargazing about the retirement home on which our hopes and plans were centered. We had visions of a small ancient, Dutch farmhouse, with walk-in fireplaces and hand-hewn beams, approached through a lane of century-old maple trees, a spacious lawn dotted with old-fashioned flowers, and a backyard gently sloping toward the Hudson River. Nor would we be averse to having an old timber barn and a few fruit trees here and there about the property. "This," said my friends, "is something most everyone would love to own. You are just looking for a needle in a haystack." We were not to be discouraged, however, so, in 1949 we stored our furniture, got in our car and set out on our phantom search. It proved a tougher job than we had anticipated.

After two months, driving up and down the roads running parallel to both sides of the Hudson River as far north as Kingston, we found the most desirable locations were occupied by religious organizations. The few houses for sale



on the river were large gloomy Victorian architectural monstrosities, or replicas of Europe's baronial manors, too large and expensive in upkeep for the present-day tax-burdened generation to occupy. Most were unoccupied, their owners having moved elsewhere when railroads were built running parallel with the river bank and the locomotives sent clouds of smoke and cinders into their drawing rooms. This nuisance has since been eliminated by electrification.

We were now ready to settle for some other river and chose the Wallkill, which runs parallel with the Hudson but in the opposite direction. The few old houses for sale that we located on or near the river, were either miles away on dirt roads or beyond redemption by repair, or ruined by the careless remodelers' hands.

As Christmas time drew near, our speedometer showed we had traveled nearly ten thousand miles in search of our dream house, yet were no nearer to attaining our goal than on the day we started. We were now considering a house on a creek, but this proved as elusive as had one on the river. Before we became desperate enough to buy just anything that had a roof on, Spanish included, we decided to drive to Florida, spend the winter there and return in the spring to resume our search.

\* \* \* \*

It was a cold but clear evening when we left Kingston for Florida via New York City, but we ran into a sleet storm; the visibility was about six feet ahead of the windshield, large trucks with blinding headlights were tearing by splashing sludge over our car as if we were emerging in a submarine, so we decided to stop over night in the first motel or tavern. In Milton, a sleepy little village about twenty miles south of Kingston on Route 9W, we registered in an ancient hotel and tavern and spent the remaining part of the evening in the tap room in front of a flaming log fire. There we chatted with a couple of inquisitive rustic natives who freely offered information about houses for sale in the town, with addi-

tional advice on how to approach the owners, whom they classified in category from saints to loathsome maggots. One house in particular they spoke of as the "George Washington house" and this aroused our interest, for their description of it sounded a bit like the answer to our dream house. We dared not let our hopes rise too high, though, for it sounded too good to be true that we, by accident more than design, should stumble on to what we were seeking. We lost no time in following up this clue and next morning drove to Indian Road where the unoccupied Washington house was located. It sat back a distance from the road behind three gnarled old maple trees. Three acres of land behind it were studded with young fruit trees and there was a large barn at the extreme end of the property.

We were a little disappointed in the vivid colored asphalt shingles which decorated the exterior walls of both barn and house, placed there by the then owner. Over the front door was a small tablet proclaiming it to be George Washington's house, built in 1745. Although it had acquired the bent and leaning shape of old age, it was a precise and authentic Dutch colonial, one of the few which had escaped the careless remodeler's hands. I pushed the tottering door open for a view of the interior, which disclosed a curious arrangement of the rooms, with no modern improvements of any kind. The wide, pine boards were covered with dirt and falling plaster, and the removing of a few laths from the ceiling exposed wide handhewn beams. Behind a partition in the kitchen was a five-foot high and eight-foot long stone fireplace with a crane and Dutch oven. On a thorough inspection from the cellar to the attic, I found the oak beams to be in a fairly good condition considering their age. On finishing our inspection of the house, we returned to the front lawn as the fog rose over the waters of the Hudson, revealing through the naked branches of the trees a most impression view of the Berkshire foothills in the distance. Enchanted by the view, we fell like a ton of bricks and hurried to see the owner, a genial Italian, who, after some dickering, accepted our offer, whereupon

we drank a toast to our house in old Italian wine which he brought from his cellar. This ceremony over, we drove to the village, where the postmistress introduced us to the village nonagenarian patriarch who entertained us the rest of the afternoon with interesting narratives and legends about the town of Milton, spiced with rustic and chimerical amendments, some of which are interesting enough to relate.

"First of all," he said, "don't believe that George Washington ever occupied your house. He may have stopped there for a drink or two because it was occupied as a tavern during the Revolutionary War and was also a sort of headquarters for the spies of the Continental Army. If you move that wall panel next to the fireplace in the kitchen, you will find a trap door in ceiling leading to the attic, also a trap door leading to the cellar. These were used as escape hatches by the spies when suspicious looking characters approached. When the English fleet sailed up the Hudson to sack Kingston, they must have had orders to stop on their way to spray a few cannon balls on the old spyhouse, but somehow the first cannon ball hit the roof of the old Hallock house instead. Inded, if you like, you can still see that ball embedded in one of the rafters. Old Hallock got mad enough to row his boat out to the fleet and told them they were bombarding a Quaker village and that their faith forbade forceful retaliation. This probably saved Milton and that old spy house too. It may interest you to know that George Innes, the famous painter of Hudson River scenery used your old barn as a studio for several years."

The old fellow lit his pipe, leaned back in his chair and then went on: "I might as well tell you a bit about the neighborhood where your house is located.

"When Captain William Bond landed here with a patent from Queen Ann for a 7000-acre tract of land, he never knew he was inroading on the sacred soil of the Indians. The very spot below your house is where the Indians held their consecrating rites and buried their warriors. Right to the north is a sepulchre overlooking the Hudson, where their chiefs

were buried. A mile or so to the south is the Devil's Danse Kammer, a mountain cave, where the combined tribes held their infamous orgies and where Captain Kid is supposed to have buried his treasure. According to the legends, the Indians believed that whatsoever violated these grounds would be haunted to destruction. Now," he continued, "don't let this scare you. Your house is standing right outside the boundary line. But let me tell you what happened to most of the poor people who erected abodes on those places. The first person who erected an abode on the burial ground was a bluff leatherfaced sea captain. He had bounced in his four-masted schooner over the seven seas, and probably met the 'Flying Dutchman' more than once. He was well versed in the lore of the Incas and should have known about an Indian burial ground. Nevertheless he built his home there, with a large porch, whose pillars were cut from the masts of his schooner. He came well prepared with a copy of Cotton Mathers' 'History of New England Witchcraft' which contained instructions for counteracting the spirits. His son took over after his death, but the leaves of Cotton Mathers' book were long since worn to a frazzle and beyond reading. His crops were poor, his animals died. He sold out for a fraction of its value. Following him were several successors, all in time harrassed by misfortune and death. One owner, who owned part of the land, fought with his neighbor and to wreak vengeance on him, sold his own part to Father Devine. Now here was a formidable match for the ghosts: 'God,' personified, took possession with an array of angels, some weighing two hundred pounds or more. On holidays Hudson River steamers unloaded thousands of 'souls' with angel aspirations. Large porches were added to the house to accommodate seven hundred at one sitting, at twenty-five cents a meal, 'dessert included.' An enormous enclosed pier house was built to bunk the overflow. Throughout the night, chanting could be heard for leagues. It was enough to drive a respectable spirit nuts. From the throne erected in the dining room 'Father' promised his followers eternal earthly life. If death overtook



them they were disowned. Everybody was happy except the spirits and the county officials who had to bury the black sheep at public expense. 'Father' proved so formidable a contender for honors in disturbing the peace that it began to look as if the jig of the spirits was up.

"However, the old timers will tell you an indian fights best from an ambush. He will toss an arrow in your back when you least expect it. The first incident came in the form of a stroke of lightning that burned the pier house to the water's edge. Next a sheriff came with a warrant for 'Father's' arrest, charging him with fraud and he fled from the jurisdiction of the courts of New York."

At this point I managed to get in a quip about superstitious folks, to which the old man responded with, "Yeah! I bet you wouldn't nail a horseshoe upside down over your doorway, walk under the ladder or sleep in room number thirteen. I still remember the time Ma broke a mirror and our best cow passed out. But wait! You haven't heard my story out. Father Devine sold the house to an Italian business man whose wife died shortly after taking occupancy and he moved back to New Jersey and left the house in charge of a caretaker. Now, if you ask Old Joe, he'll show you two large stones lying by the entrance under the shade of a giant sycamore tree on which are lettered 'Peace to the world' and 'God thank you Father.' To obscure the lettering Joe has on occasion painted over the words, but they mysteriously reappear. Yes, I'm waiting now to see what is going to happen next."

We bought the old man a couple of good cigars and drove him home. As we passed the Library, the librarian called us in to show us a book by "Woolsey" on the History of the Town of Marlborough, which had a full page picture of our house, describing it as the oldest house in the Township. It was all so historical, so romantic. The very earth surrounding the old house was saturated with history. While we were working on its restoration we felt almost as if we were treading on hallowed ground.

In the period of our star gazing about our dream house,

we had also decided on its name: Den-Eire—"Den" for Denmark and "Eire" for Ireland. However, it seemed like an act of desecration to hang a plaque with those foreign names on the old spy house, so when an artist neighbor brought a small sign with "George Washington's Headquarters" lettered on it, we nailed it on the front, although we knew it might not be true. To conserve our funds we did all the work of the different trades ourselves with many makeshift tools, such as shearing furnace pipes with a can opener, and cutting linoleum with a pocket knife. It was in the middle of the winter; our only heat was from a huge, rusty old stove which defiantly resisted all our efforts to sprout anything but black smoke. I kept warm by working and Molly kept hot by scraping ten coats of paint from the old woodwork. The asphalt shingles were covered with wood clapboards, painted red with white trim.

It was a happy moment when the van brought our furniture, though its arrangement in the rooms caused many arguments, which as you may know, were all won by Molly: though she is a real partner, she is not a silent one and certainly knows how to assert herself!

Now Spring 1951 had come. The house was finished, the garden plants were in full bloom. We were sitting on the old bench enjoying the splendor of the blossoming peach and apple trees and the old-fashioned flowers Molly had planted; both of us contented with a feeling of permanence as if we belonged to the old house, an emotion I had never experienced before. We both felt that this was the place where we could happily spend the remainder of our days—never dreaming that in a moment or so the bottom would fall out of everything!

Looking down the road toward the river we noticed several expensive-looking cars parked, which were unloading numerous well-dressed colored gentlemen. These proved to be a delegation from the Church of colored Seventh Day Adventists, who were inspecting Father Devine's former 'heaven' with intentions to purchase and use it as a children's

camp and revival ground. We were told that during the summer months there would be as many as three thousand chanting devotees. Molly became frantic and wanted to move back immediately to the sidewalks of Long Island. It was no help that I reminded her of the superstition inherent in such a wish by assuring her the Indian spirits would soon make hash of the Adventists. I did admit, though, that it would be insufferable for a good Catholic to have to listen to loud-speakers blare sacred hymns to the melodies of jazz, but there was nothing we could do about it: we were stuck!

While we were discussing our gloomy future, the neighbor's daughter called with the information that in our absence a couple had stopped at our house, peeped through the windows and inspected the exterior both of house and barn. On approaching them, she was told that they were interested in its purchase and had asked her to transmit a message to us, the message, in effect, being an appointment for the following Saturday.

On their arrival one of them, a lady, stated that she was related to an eighty-four year old lady in California, whose American progenitor, a fellow with the lyrical name of "Eliza Lewis," had built our house in 1745. The old lady had sent them on an errand to see if the house was still there and, if so, to negotiate for its purchase as she wished to spend her remaining days in it and, at death, to be buried among her ancestors in the little graveyard back of the old house. We gave them a fair price, which they promised to submit to the old lady.

Three weeks later we received a certified check for the full amount of the purchase price. Our contract of sale provided for sixty days' grace, which we spent looking for other quarters. For some reason or other, the old lady did not remain long but moved back to California. A couple years later part of the old house and a large new addition that had been built were destroyed by fire. Down below, on Father Devine's old "heaven," things weren't going so good either. First, the elder in charge passed to his just reward. Later, the

Adventists, for unknown reasons and after spending a fortune on improveemnts, moved across the river. In the village there were those who, laying claim to visionary propensities, blamed the calamities on the Indian spirits.

Sixty days proved to be a rather short period in which to locate an old house worthy of restoration, one that would also meet Molly's specifications of being close to stores and church. Our days of grace were about run out when we located a century-old farm house on the edge of a creek near the village of Millbrook in Dutchess County. It was a large house, with an imposing front porch and several "do it yourself" additions on the sides and in the rear. The interior was cut up into many small rooms. A neighbor told us that for each new arrival in his family the former owner, wanting a separate bedroom for each child, on its arrival would simply run a dividing partition across the room. His family must have been very large, since some of the rooms had been divided by three. The only sizable room was an enormous kitchen, heated by an immense double-decker wood stove. It was far from what we wanted as a home, but, with some repairs, we could later sell it and then look for something more suitable.

In the horse-and-buggy age Millbrook was a flourishing village, inhabited by many well known wealthy people who had come and fallen in love with the round hills and the excellent hunting offered. Some of them built large estates which they occupied during the summer and the hunting season. To facilitate access to New York City for those who maintained apartments on Fifth Avenue or offices in Wall Street, a railroad was built joining the main tracks of the New York Central at Beacon. Its coaches were in ornate Victorian style, the train was truly named the "Millionaires' Special." Important social events were celebrated in the spacious and costly decorated clubhouse, illuminated by glittering acetylene gas lamps. This gas was a substance invented by Mr. Dietrich, an important member of the colony, whose



invention illuminated almost every street lamp in the country.

A description of Mr. Dietrich's estate will give an idea of the fortunes spent in erecting these manors. He was the owner of four thousand acres, enclosed in a nine-foot-high wire fence, ten miles long. It was stocked with rare wild game imported from Germany and white peacocks from Japan at three hundred dollars apiece, cared for by a "Jagermeister," trained in his skill in Germany.

No feudal lord ever boasted a stronger or more impressive portal. It is built of large boulders and ornamented with stone dentils, curved alcoves equipped with massive stone benches; a heavy oak elevator door spiked with studs lifted by the gate keeper to admit the equipages, the keeper having his abode under the red Spanish tile roof of the portal. Close beyond the portal an arched stone bridge spans a moat; on its portal side is a tall stone tower crowned with a parapet and, inside it, a circular stone stair winds its descent to the edge of the moat, once adorned with black and white swans floating gracefully about. By a stretch of imagination one can hear a bugler as he, in medieval times, heralded the arrival of friend or foe and can see the glittering arms and armor of the Hun army marching over the bridge. The road from the portal leading to the main house is lined on both sides with large maple trees, once trimmed to form an arch over the roadway. Within a few rods in the rear of the main house is a Swiss chalet, used as a guest house; its interior contains several bedrooms, a bowling alley and a *bierstube*. On the side of the road leading from the main house to the barns are, at intervals, what resemble pagodas, built of stone, with pellet friezes in relief, panel niches, elliptical arches, stone benches and drinking fountains. Enclosed within a tall brick wall is a large-domed conservatory, which once upon a time housed rare plants and flowers from all corners of the world. A masterpiece of stone masonry is the quarter mile causeway over a moat, its buttressed stone wall rising twenty-five feet from the ground. An Italian designed villa built on a hilltop

at a cost of a quarter million dollars was a wedding present to Dietrich's son. All in all three hundred men worked on the entire project more than seven years.

If posterity had been the motive for all this grandeur, the owners miscalculated, for, after the turn of the century the golden Victorian era was over and in its place came creeping socialism. Ambitious, egotistic politicians plunged the world into war and debt, now being paid for with confiscatory taxes. The younger generations are moving into compact stream-lined pushbutton homes. Some of the estates are being cut up into development plots. The Dietrich estate is in a sad state of decay. The railroad ceased operating long ago. The clubhouse is now the Bennett College. Millbrook, a well-run village, still shows earmarks of former wealth, striving to emulate its former grandeur.

By the time the repairs on our house were completed it was Christmas again and it looked as if we were in for a long and dull winter. City dwellers moving to small country towns find it almost impossible to make the right kind of social connections. The upper stratum of a small town's society is composed mostly of descendants of the early settlers, whose circle is as difficult to enter as that of New York City's "Four Hundred." The middle class, or "Rotary crowd," is made up of business or professional men who have nothing in common with a person in retirement. There is, of course, the manual working brigade, but these spend most of their time working, drowsing or sleeping, their idea of luxury being a bath and a pinochle game on Saturday night.

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To break the monotony we decided to visit Molly's uncle Ned in Ireland. This was a cheery idea, as my previous meeting with two different groups of in-laws had been interesting, pleasant and educational. On January 3rd, 1953, we left New York for Cobh, Ireland. Uncle Ned, Aunt Maggie and their eldest daughter were at the pier to welcome us. Knowing that Molly had married a "Left Legger," my introduction

on their part was of a prying nature. It took a considerable amount of maneuvering to get our luggage crammed into the small Minx and a lot of pushing before we got Aunt Maggie and her two hundred and fifty pounds squeezed into the back with Molly and the daughter, while I seated myself on top of a suitcase on the front seat for a forty-mile ride to Fermoy on the most nerve-racking trip in my life. Uncle Ned, who was eighty years old and suffered from defective vision, pushed the accelerator to the floorboard, causing the little car to bounce from one side of the road to the other, barely missing several oncoming cars. At times I thought my head would go clear through the top, while Uncle Ned kept rambling on in a brogue I couldn't understand. By the time we arrived at Fermoy I was limp as a rag.

Uncle Ned owned a four hundred acre farm on the edge of the "Black Water"; his conventional two-story stone-and-concrete house on a hilltop had a splendid view of the Black Waters snaking along the foot of the "Bally Hooley" Mountains. Although the house had an imposing exterior, the interior was rather primitive. Its heating system was a tiny fireplace in each room, where a mixture of peat and soft coal furnished heat. Though many years ago Ireland was called "the Island of Woods," it is bare now. On retiring we were instructed not to light a fire in our bedroom as a swarm of bees was hibernating in the chimney.

Uncle Ned is considered a big landowner, yet had never been able to exert enough influence to get his farm equipped with electricity from a generating plant a mile away. A condition prevailing extensively throughout Ireland, this is an obstacle to their agricultural production. Denmark, ten thousand square miles less in area, yielded nearly twenty-five million dollars worth of farm products to Ireland's nine million. There is practically no industry of any kind; almost everything in the line of implements and appliances has a "Made in England" label stamped on it. On one of our shopping trips to Cork we saw some ashtrays with a picture

of Blarney Castle, which, we thought, would make nice presents, but they, too, had the stamp of England on them.

We ransacked many shops before we found an inferior grade of ashtrays stamped "Made in Ireland." One thing we had our hearts set on was to buy a few pieces of the delicate Irish Belleek china, but we were informed that the factory was allowed to make a certain amount only and this was reserved for the "dollar tourists" and on sale only during the summer months. Crossing the streets, to get from one shop to the other, was a tedious affair, a confusion of speeding automobiles, farm wagons and donkey carts. Worst of all were the funeral processions and their slow tempo: headed by six men, who carried the coffin on their shoulders, the processions varied in numbers according to the popularity of the deceased and at times took ten minutes or more to pass. On this occasion we were half way across the street when everything in motion came to a dead stop, persons bowed their heads and crossed themselves, while I stood motionless and observing. When it was over, Uncle Ned, who was along, looked at me pityingly and said, "Don't you know the Angelus Bells?" It wasn't the first time he had looked at me that way; I was probably the first Protestant who had ever entered his house.

In spite of midwinter, the fields were green, the cattle were in pasture and two of Uncle Ned's sons were ploughing. There were nine children in the family; though the two sons were in their thirties, they were single and, like so many other young men in the neighborhood, seemed to be more interested in "Riding with the Hounds" than in sex.

The great charm of the Irish is their leisurely way of life and the moral feeling that seems to prevail. The day our visit ended, Uncle Ned and Aunt Maggie drove us to the station for the train ride to the Rosslare Fishguard ferry. When I planted a farwell smack on Aunt Maggie's lips, she turned as red as a beet as she looked around to see if anyone had noticed her indulge in such a passionate pastime.

The English official who examined our credentials in



Fishguard expressed surprise at the few passengers aboard the ferry. "At that rate the young ones have been coming over here," he said, "there can't be many more left."

We stopped in London for a week but it wasn't very pleasant; rationing was still in effect, and as there was a continuation of rain, sleet and fog, we left for Harwich, where we boarded a Danish boat for Denmark for a most unpleasant trip over the turbulent North Sea.

My twin brother was at the railroad station in Copenhagen to escort us to the residence of my widowed sister, whom I hadn't seen for twenty years. She received us with open arms and congratulated me on my improvement in the selection of wives. She was most heavily endowed with this world's goods and made it most pleasant for us. Molly, who ordinarily can talk an arm off of you, was quite annoyed by the language barrier and her compulsory silence. She got along in the better shops where most clerks spoke English. But she is a "do it myself" girl and insisted on going shopping on her own and sometimes made laughable purchases: once, for instance, a tube of toothpaste turned out to contain glue. After two months of sightseeing and visiting relatives and old friends, we left for a trip through Sweden and Norway, where we boarded a steamer at Stavanger for New York and arrived there "full of" and smelling like fish from that boat's main cargo.

We were at home in our Millbrook house but a few weeks before we found a purchaser, and started out on another house-hunting expedition. A mile or so before entering the village of New Paltz we noticed a large sign by the roadside proclaiming it to be a village of culture and refinement. Now, culture and refinement have never hurt anyone, so we decided to give it a trial and stopped at a combination barber shop and real estate office where the Italian realtor was in process of shaving a customer. On our inquiring about a five room house on his sales list, he immediately stopped work on his half-shaven customer to scan the leaves of a dog-eared volume, moving his index finger slowly down the pages,

stopping now and then by an item on the list to describe in broken English and glowing terms, its charm and durability. I managed to interrupt him with the information that we were looking for an old house in need of repair: this meant less in commision he would receive and, with a despondent look on his face, he turned to the last page of the volume and stated, "I gotta one house, so old he can hardly stand up." We went to take a look and prayed that the rest of his listings would be as truthfully described.

We drove then into the village to see the Main Street realtor. After we har described our dream house, a jubilant smile flashed over his face as he exclaimed: "What a coincidence! You came to the right place at the right moment. My last listing is an answer to your prayer. It is old, it has a view of the Wallkill River, apple trees, a two-acre kitchen garden whose products could furnish you with a good living, and you can haul your Friday meals right out of the river." There were, he admitted, a couple of minor objections but which were now in the course of being corrected, and this he would explain as we drove toward the place. We turned off Main Street, passing a row of ramshackle houses hugging the railroad track, when an obnoxious odor settled over the landscape. The realtor stopped in front of a foul smelling dump, pointed his finger to a house in the near distance and said, "That's it—but don't let this dump discourage you. It has served the village and the townshop for the last fifty years but now the local Chamber of Commerce and other civic minded organizations are working on its removal." We took one glance toward the house and bade him return us to the village.

Later, while eating our lunch in the village coffee shop, we were ridiculing the old house and the realtor's low estimate of us by offering us a house near a dump, when the proprietor spoke up: "That house you're talking about is worth a second thought, Mister," he said. "It's an old landmark and has the nicest layout of any in town. It's a bargain at the price offered by the realtor and after the dump is

moved you can make yourself a nice slice of dough on a resale."

We drove back for another look. The main house seemed to be in fairly good condition, but the surrounding ground was littered with small, leaning outbuildings, in part consumed by termites. Behind the rear property line stood a large barn, partly obscuring the view of the river. Beyond the river was a striking topographic spectacle of the perpendicular east front face of the Shawangunk Mountains.

We were admitted to the house by an attractive young woman who seemed anxious to unload it: I wondered for what reason. Gossiping neighbors later told us that she had inherited a fortune, then given her husband the gate and was getting ready to leave the state with her three children.

Evidently Oscar Wilde had never lived in the country when he said, "Anybody can be good in the country; there are no temptations there." If any city dweller moves to the country with the belief that he and his sins are escaping notice he is badly mistaken. Fellow citizens may pass you seemingly unconcerned, but they know where you came from and where you are going. To verify, merely lift the receiver on the party line phone for a few juicy morsels.

After thorough inspection I offered the young lady a price which she immediately accepted and a few days later we moved into the old house. It was well under way to respectability when a neighbor came to visit with the local gazette under her arm. "Well," she said, "the village fathers have finally decided to move the dump!" Then, giving us a look as if to say, "It serves you right," she added, "Right next door to your property line."

Thus apprised of what portended, we attended the next meeting of the village board to render our protest. The acting chairman, when we told him what we had heard, solemnly assured us that there was nothing pertaining to the dump to be taken up at this meeting, so we left. However, having had experiences during my business career with poli-

ticians, I thought it better to return and remain until the end of the meeting.

As I opened the door I heard one of the board members say, "Tomorrow the bulldozers are starting to mow the trees down on the new dump." Immediately I rose to protest, threatening the village with a lawsuit and an injunction if any garbage was dumped next door to my property. Then, in the next issue of the local paper, I wrote an article asking the support of every fair-minded person in the village by attending the next board meeting. That meeting was packed to capacity with almost everyone (except the Mayor) in favor of moving the dump far out of the village. The result was, the dump remained on the same plot but it was moved back out of sight from the road, with the stench, rats and insects still there in abundance. Shortly after that, and since most of the land belonging to the house had been sold, the Mayor and board of assessors paid me a visit to reassess the property for tax purposes—and raised the valuation from the original one thousand to three thousand dollars. The township assessor's unbiased valuation was one thousand dollars.

Well, the biblical Adam certainly got into a lot of trouble when he started to mess around apples, and they are still a lot of trouble. Our neighbor, whose orchard hugged our property line, sprayed it at least seventeen times that summer, spraying he always managed to do when Molly had her clothes out on the line. However, the worst part was yet to come. When apple-picking time came around the neighbor filled his old barn with a truckload of Alabama Negro apple pickers with their families. As no sanitary facilities of any kind had been built, our garden was trampled on and used as a depository for excretions. Too, at times there were drunken orgies, shouting and singing at night. To shield us from such unpleasant spectacles, I erected a solid board fence on the rear property line. When the first frost came, the Negroes left for a warmer climate and we offered our house for sale. The interim between then and the sale was used looking for a new home.

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If you are in Dutchess County, anyone will tell you that you are on the right side of the river, so we decided to give it a whirl. To get away from high taxes, labor trouble and congestion, factories are moving up along the Hudson. Any town with mooring facilities is growing rapidly in population and industry. Naturally, the influx of personnel has created a big demand for moderate priced homes in this vicinity, but most people are afraid to buy an old house on account of the expense of putting it in repair. The advantage I had was in knowing how.

In our travels along the Hudson we had occasionally driven through an attractive little village named Pleasant Valley. In 1955 we decided to concentrate our house-hunting efforts on this locality. After searching the area thoroughly without results, we were about ready to give up when a storekeeper told us about an old house near the village. The owner, an old settler, was undecided, it developed, whether to tear it down or have it put in repair. At the moment his son was living in the house but had found it so uncomfortable that he was planning on moving across the road into his father's house. Though it had the shape of a Dutch colonial, it didn't look like much of a house, but there was a creek running through the property and the neighborhood was excellent, close to church and stores.

Approaching the owner as to his knowledge about houses for sale in that neighborhood, he simply said there were none, never mentioning anything about his own old house. After a few minutes of conversation I got up to leave, when, giving me a deeply scrutinizing look, he said, "Perhaps I would let you buy my old house. I shall talk with my wife about it, and you can have the answer tomorrow."

The next day we closed a deal on it with the stipulation that his son could remain in the house for the next two months. A week later we sold our house in New Paltz, stored our furniture and left to spend the winter in Florida.

We rented a small house for the season in Boynton Beach,

a delightful village, situated a few miles south of Palm Beach. For elderly folks, particularly the retired middle class who must exist on savings or Social Security, this place is a veritable paradise, where living is most informal, at less year-round cost than any place up North. This, of course, applies to most of southern Florida, unless you happen to be of the "money no object" set which patronizes exclusive Palm Beach or prodigious Miami Beach. The permanent residents from the North discover that many of their physical ailments have diminished. They have no trouble making new friends, as the majority have as much time to dissipate as they themselves have. Social activities are flourishing, with clubs named for many states and foreign countries, from which its members have come. Admittance to the beach is free and the beach pavilion is used for get-together parties. But the biggest attraction by far is the shuffle board club and its annex, with a separate pinochle room and large dining room where many a potluck supper is held during the season and, "believe it or not," many romances have budded. The Gulf Stream is about a mile from shore and is unequalled in the variety of the sport-of-rod and reel for those who care to do battle with the big boys, such as the barracuda, sailfish, kingfish, pompano and many other varieties. For the sportsmen who seek less excitement, there is fishing from the causeway, bridge or pier. There is a great variety of flowers, such as the hibiscus, poinsettia, bougainvillea, oleander, which have very little scent but a trip to the nearby citrus groves when the orange trees are in bloom rewards you with an exotic scent you'll never forget. Yes, you can have a garden with flowers blooming every month of the year!

Most houses are built of hurricane-proof construction, of hollow concrete blocks and steel re-inforced concrete floors. The woodwork is of cyprus wood, which is less harmed by moisture and vermin. Roofs are of white material, to reflect the heat, and many roofs have an "overhang" for protection against the high summer sun. Lawns are a headache; topsoil, fertilizer and water seem to seep right through the sand. Some

people, after much patience, labor and expense, manage to raise a lawn, soon to find it destroyed by chinch bugs and other insects. As a matter of fact, my only two objections to Florida are the insects, ants in particular, which are everywhere, and the long intense summer heat. But then, there is no spot anywhere that is not free from some disadvantages. Anyway, we felt we weren't sufficiently adaptable to enjoy Florida as a steady diet; besides, we had that old house up north in Pleasant Valley, begging someone to come and give it a lift.

I guess the old gentleman who sold us the house, which he had regarded as a wreck, was a bit surprised when he came in to inspect our progress and saw that the plaster was off the ceiling and the old hand-hewn beams exposed and even more so when he came in the fall to inspect the nearly finished product of our labor. If he thought he had driven a good bargain in its sale, his gestures indicated the opposite. It had been a lot of work, much more than I had expected.

The labor in restoring an old house is almost equal to the erection of a new one. There are dry rotten timbers to root out, rotten window sashes of odd sizes not carried in stock by the mills and that have to be handmade, floors to level out, and cellar walls to point up, and many coats of old paint to be removed. Some houses, where former owners, to keep the wind from whistling through the openings between the sill and foundation, have banked dirt above the woodwork, which is an invitation to termites. It is then necessary to dig trenches along the foundation wall and pour a dilution of chlordane therein. Once the dirt is removed a safe distance from the woodwork, the termites, which must have moisture to exist, disappear.

It was near Christmas—"my, how time flies," particularly if you are occupied and needn't worry about it if you are the owner of an old house. During earlier winter months my idle hours have been spent in writing and making minor interior improvements. Nevertheless, it is rather confining to a person who is used to an active outdoor life, so we

packed our handbags and drove to Boynton Beach, Florida, for the winter.

In traversing the Hudson Valley in search of old houses I have yet to see any remains of the architecture of the early Dutch settlers—a center and two wings, the gable ends of which were shaped like stairs. But driving through the villages and settlements one can see some of the early homes built by the Dutch and the English. The oldest is the Philippsse Manor in Yonkers, the early stone section of which was built in 1682, with the brick section added in 1740. There is the Fort Crailo, opposite Albany and the Teller Homestead near Poughkeepsie. Then there are the Brinkerhoff, John Jay, Hendrick Kip and the Wharton houses, all near Fishkill; also the stone houses in New Paltz. These were all built prior to 1740. Scattered about are several houses, probably as old as the above mentioned, which were built by the bourgeois, whose origin is lost in the obscurity of time. Some of these houses have escaped the hand of the careless remodeler and still manifest the skill of the early artisan. Many country homes built in 1797 and thereafter were constructed from the specifications of Asher Benjamin, whose “The Country Builders’ Assistant” helped generations of home builders and was the bible of the old-time carpenters. Others of those old houses, whose frames were constructed from the native oak, are as solid now as on the day they were built. It is more in sorrow than in anger that I notice one of those time-worn and weather-beaten houses of antiquity occupied by a family of that ever-shifting crowd who, in their coarse and obvious way, trample on tradition by desecrating it with “do it yourself” repairs.

In 1854 the Harlem Railway made connection along the river’s bank between New York and Albany. It brought a wealthy class of Manhattanites, who became known as the “Hudson River Gentry” and who erected mansions in an architectural fashion which became known as the Hudson River Gothic. Close to a hundred country homes were built, the cost of some mounting to two million dollars. At River-



dale is the "Fronthill," the forest castle modeled after the Duke of Devonshire's "Lismore" in County Waterford, Ireland. On a high hill in Garrison is E. Dick's unfinished Florentine castle; and the Bannerman's Scotch castle at the foot of Breakneck Mountain is a faithful reproduction of a moat-encircled castle. There are also, to mention a few more, Edgwood, the elaborate estate of John Stuyvesant; the Robert Pell mansion; the Vanderbilt mansion, and the statue-strewn Wiltwyck—all monuments built by men with grandiose ideas for the perpetuation of their names. One, John Conger, went so far as to engage an explorer to ship an entire Mayan village from Yucatan to Congers Island!

However, there was something new in home construction, too, for the bourgeois; one by Orson Fowler, America's first known phrenologist. This is the eight-sided house, boasted by nearly every river town.

We are now back in the old house in Pleasant Valley, after spending a pleasant winter in Florida, but there is not much to do; the restoration of the house is completed. There is the garden, of course, of which Molly has taken full charge: she has accused me of not knowing a weed from a flower and won't allow me to use any garden tools except the wheelbarrow. So my time is spent writing and driving through the countryside with my eyes peeled for interesting old houses. But Molly has refused to move anywhere else unless I should happen to find a house on the bank of the Hudson, close to stores and church, which is very remote, indeed. Though I am pushing seventy-seven, my interest in life has not diminished in the least; I am still looking forward to participating in more adventures. While waiting for events to occur, I have developed a tendency toward reminiscing and this has brought to my mind the fate "Dame Fortune" dealt four other young men who were my boyhood friends in Denmark and whose first stop in America was at my address. It took a lot of correspondence to obtain the information.

The first to arrive was the leader of the boys who frequently stopped at old "Hytte Stine's." A tough hombre,

born a hundred years too late and thoroughly unsuited for a life among the docile Danes. He headed for Wyoming, became a cowboy, rodeo performer, and a game warden and led a life resembling that of his boyhood dreams. Next was a fellow with whom I had served my carpentry apprenticeship: of the same profession, we naturally became working partners. One incident stands out in memory: working on a job where the boss short-changed us out of a dollar or more each payday, we decided to quit. While packing our tools, my partner spotted a chisel belonging to the boss which he appropriated to make up for the short change. We were about to board a street car when the boss and a policeman came puffing down the street. "John Law" searched our boxes and arrested my partner, who was sentenced to six months in the Bridewell. On his release, we both got jobs as carpenters with the Illinois Central Railroad on the construction of a saw mill near Jackson, Mississippi. Regardless of warnings, he drank from the polluted water of a small lake close to where we worked, and came down with malaria. Shortly after we returned to Chicago he married, but was never again really well and died a few days before his wife gave birth to twins.

One day I was reading a detective magazine when my eyes fell upon a story in which a familiar name was mentioned—the name of Visitor Number 3, a moody character, inclined to bolster his spirit in Bacchus nectar. He headed West, where he accumulated a fortune in real estate. To support his luxurious living during the depression he sold and gave title to real estate he never owned. Arrested for fraud, he was sentenced to ten years in a penitentiary. Then there was John, a mason by trade and as handsome as a man could be. He headed for Boston, arriving there at a most opportune moment. His boss's teen-age daughter was burning up for love, happily offered by John, who was a master in the art of seduction. They were hurriedly married and he became her old man's business partner. He had "put one over on the Yankees." His firm built many public buildings

but when they started to crumble after a short time, investigators found that they were built way below specifications, with the usual distribution of graft. The Yankees selected John as their scapegoat and jailed him for a long period. The last time I saw John he was sitting in a drunken stupor on a curb in the Bowery!

Those boys all came from good families and came here of their own free will but would probably have fared far better if they had left their avaricious desires behind in Denmark.

As an adolescent in Denmark I saw many leave the densely populated country for various reasons. Some went in search of dollars, others for fame or to escape from conformity, and some were driven by force or pleading, while others left in a spirit of adventure. I must admit that I belonged to the latter category. Looking back I can say that I was not disappointed, though it has not proved to be the kind of adventure I had anticipated, but I am sure that life here has been a lot more rewarding than anything in Denmark has ever been able to offer. If my motive in coming here had been a dollar one, I am unequivocally sure that if I had dedicated my time to that purpose I could have been a very wealthy man. As to fame—well, that is for persons only who are endowed with great talents. But—talent or not, whoever came here escaped the monotony of conformity.

On my arrival here as a youth of eighteen, traveling my first two years as a hobo through the country, gave me the opportunity to see and appreciate the charms that Nature has so lavishly bestowed on it. I knew my future was in America. I wanted to be an American, not the kind who renounces their physical allegiance to their fatherland yet maintain their mental affinity with that land. I have never belonged to any foreign societies nor subscribed to their periodicals, or saddled my name with a hyphen. "You either are or you ain't!" It is not so long ago that a prominent Norwegian-American made a speech on the Norwegian Independence day in Brooklyn and said, "There is nothing nicer in the

whole world than to be a Norwegian in Brooklyn." That would have been a wonderful speech if he had left the Norwegian out!

So, summing up my life. I'm happy that I came early to America and became a citizen of the United States. I've had my "ups and downs" but my "downs" have been more than offset by the "ups." I've had a good life in America!

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